LATTER-DAY SWEETHEARTS

MRS. BURTON HARRISON

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A flower shot down amid the crowd. Page 19.

Latter-Day Sweethearts

By

MRS. BURTON HARRISON

Author of "A Bachelor Maid," "The Carlyles," "The Circle of a Century," "The Anglomaniacs," Etc.

"La Duchesse.—'L'amour est le fléau du monde. Tous nos maux nous viennent de lui.'
"Le Docteur.—'C'est le seul qui les guérisse."
—"*Le Duel*," *Henri Lavedan.*

Harrison, Constance (Cary),

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(FACSIMILE PAGE OF MANUSCRIPT FROM LATTER-DAY SWEETHEARTS)

Mrs Bleecker, Mrs Vereker and kindly mothers of unentertaining daughters, abroad, had framed a number of theories to account for the fame Pamela. She was a milliner's forewoman going out to secure fashions for Alisons Cross Roads, Alabama. She was a dashing divorcée, who had resumed her maiden name. She had been a barmaid in California, an artists' model in New York, an assistant washerwoman in the Klondyke — had tried on cloaks in a leading dry goods store in Chicago; in all of which capacities there was somebody on the ship who had known someone who had encountered her!

Amid the successes of his daughter's meteoric rise into public favour, little Mr Winstanley prowled about, the a solitary and rather pathetic figure in his evident belief that self-effacement is the first duty of the parent of a phenomenal maidens? He seemed to live apart in a world of his own memories, from which even his Posey's triumphs could not extract him.

And Posey the other woman to the contrary, continued to reign in her revolving chair at table, and elsewhere on the big ship, as the established sovereign — Her beauty, wit and innocence had won all (unbiassed) hearts.

Constance Carr Harrison

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LATTER-DAY SWEETHEARTS

CHAPTER I

In going aboard the "Baltic" that exceptionally fine October morning, Miss Carstairs convinced herself that, of the people assembled to see her off, no one could reasonably discern in her movement the suggestion of a retreat. The commonplace of a sailing for the other side would not, indeed, have met with the recognition of any attendance at the pier among her set, save for her hint that she might remain abroad a year. There had been a small rally on the part of a few friends who had chanced to meet at a dinner overnight, to go down to the White Star docks and say good-by to Helen Carstairs. Helen sincerely wished they had not come, both because the ceremony proved a little flat, and because, when she had time to think them over, she was not so sure they were her friends.

But the main thing was that she had been

able to withdraw, easily and naturally, from a doubly trying situation. She had not wanted to go abroad. All the novelty and sparkle had gone out of that business long ago. She knew foreign travel from A to Z, and she loathed tables d'hôte, even more than the grim prospect of private meals with Miss Bleecker in sitting-rooms redolent of departed food, insufficiently atoned for by an encircling wilderness of gilding and red plush. The very thought of a concierge with brass buttons lifting his cap to her every time she crossed the hall, of hotel corridors decked with strange foot gear upon which unmade bedrooms yawned, of cabs and galleries and harpy dressmakers, of sights and fellow tourists, gave her a mental qualm. But it was better than staying at home this winter in the big house in Fifth Avenue where Mr. Carstairs had just brought a stepmother for her, in the person of "that Mrs. Coxe."

There was apparently no valid reason for Helen's shuddering antipathy to the lady, who had been the widow of a junior partner of her father, a man whom Mr. Carstairs had "made," like many another beginning in his employ.

Mr. Coxe had died two years before, of nervous overstrain, leaving this flamboyantly handsome, youngish woman to profit by his gains. Helen had always disliked having to ask the Coxes to dinner when her father's fiat compelled her to preside over the dull banquets of certain smartly-dressed women and weary, driven men, whom he assembled at intervals around his board. She could not say what she objected to in Mrs. Coxe; she thought it might be her giggle and her double chin. It had been always a relief when one of these "business" dinners was over, and she knew she would not have to do it soon again. When Mr. Carstairs dined in return with the Coxes, they had him at some fashionable restaurant, taking him afterward to the play. Mrs. Coxe had shown sense enough for that! During the interregnum of Mrs. Coxe's mourning following the demise of her exhausted lord, Mr. Carstairs had had the yacht meet Helen and himself at Gibraltar, and cruised all that winter in the Mediterranean.

That had been life abroad, Helen thought, with a throb of yearning! She was very fond of her father, rather a stony image to most

people, and immensely proud of the way people looked up to his achievements in the Street, the resistless rush of his business combinations, his massive wealth, and his perfect imperturbability to newspaper cavil and attacks by enemies. She had loved to be at the head of his establishment, and to receive the clever and distinguished and notable people, foreign and domestic, who accepted Mr. Carstairs' invitation to meet one another, because they were clever and distinguished and notable, not because they wanted to talk all the evening what they had talked all day.

When they had come home from their cruise, Helen spent the summer in Newport, where her father rarely went. The yacht was his summer home, he was wont to say; and Helen did not suspect how often that season the noble "Sans Peur" had been anchored off the shores of a settlement in Long Island where Mrs. Coxe was enjoying the seclusion of a shingled villa with broad verandas set in a pocket handkerchief of lawn. Back and forth flew the owner's steam launch between the "Sans Peur" and the landing, and yet nobody told Helen. That autumn she had

affairs of her own to absorb her time and give her a sobering view of humanity. For the first time in her life her father had vacated his throne as masculine ruler of her thoughts. She had passed into the grip of a strong, real passion for a man "nobody" knew.

That is to say, John Glynn was too hard at work to let himself be found out. Helen had indulged in her affair with him almost unknown to her acquaintances, most of whom regarded the foot of the ladder of wealth, where he distinctly stood, as the one spot where dalliance in sentiment was to be shunned. Her movements were hampered by the fact that, although the daughter of a plutocrat, she had only a trifle of her own; Mr. Carstairs having announced, with the insolent eccentricity of some men of his stripe, that she should go dowerless to her husband, hoping thus to protect her from fortune-seekers, foreign and native. So long as she remained unmarried under his roof she was to enjoy great wealth and the importance it confers. Until now Helen had not cared. Her brain was clear, her head was cool, she had tastes and occupations that filled every hour, and

plenty of people who flocked around her, paying court to the dispenser of liberal hospitalities.

Her love passage had ended in disaster, but exactly what had passed between her and the unknown Glynn, no one was sufficiently intimate with Helen to ascertain.

The marriage of her father with Mrs. Coxe had taken place in June, after which Mr. Carstairs had withdrawn his apparent objections to Newport, and blossomed out there as a villa resident of supreme importance. The months of this but partially successful experiment on the part of the new Mrs. Carstairs had been passed by Helen in suppressed misery. She had gone into camp in the Adirondacks, had visited friends at Dark Harbor, and welcomed with thankfulness the invitation to spend September with a young couple of her acquaintance who had a house at Lenox, filled, with the exception of one spare room, with assorted dogs.

Early in October her father, visibly inspired by the lady who no longer giggled in Helen's presence, but had not lost her double chin, gave his recalcitrant daughter "a good talking to." If she persisted in her rebell-

ious demeanor towards her stepmother, the more reprehensible because reserved, she was at liberty to do one of two things, viz., take a furnished house in town and engage Miss Bleecker, or somebody, to be her chaperon; or else go where she liked, abroad.

Choosing the latter alternative, Helen had been considered fortunate in securing for her companion the lady in question, who was certified by her believers to be rarely disengaged. Miss Bleecker, in earlier days, had given readings in New York drawing-rooms and elsewhere about the country, until the gradual fading away of audiences had turned her thoughts into the present more lucrative and less fatiguing channel of genteelest occupation.

Nature had gifted her with an ephemerally imposing presence, large, cold, projecting eyes, an authoritative voice and an excellent knowledge of the art of dress. It was familiarly said that to see her come into a room was a lesson to any girl; and her acquaintance with the ins and outs of New York society and fond pride in the display of it, put the dull lady beyond criticism as a general conversationalist.

The two travellers were attended by a French maid, closely modelled in exterior upon previous employers of rank abroad, whose service she had relinquished for the higher wage resulting from her American decadence in social standing. Her large wad of suspiciously golden hair, frizzed over the eyebrows, was a souvenir of a "Lady Reggie"; while the flat waist, girdled low upon the hips of a portly person, was her best tribute to the slim young Princess Bartolozzi who had had her two years in Rome. This composite rendering of great ladies did not rob Mademoiselle Eulalie of the coarse modelling of her features; but, on the other hand, as Miss Bleecker said, she was safe from couriers, and her packing was a dream.

When Helen went to the cabin de luxe secured by her father's secretary, into which Miss Bleecker's room opened, she felt impatient with the girls who followed her, exclaiming approvingly over its comforts; with the maid who stood sentinel by her gold-fitted dressing-case; with Miss Bleecker, who, in colloquy with a white-capped stewardess, was already laying down the law as to their requirements on the voyage. She hurried out

again, encompassed by her friends, to gain the upper deck, where the men of the visiting party, looking unanimously bored, awaited anxiously the ringing of the last gong that should drive them from the ship. All had been said that could be said on either side. Vague repetitions had set in. Helen's eyes roved eagerly over the crowds on the pier below, over the congested gangway. She was hoping to see her father, and—perhaps, but improbably—one other. Late in the fray a brougham rattled along the pier and drew up below. Helen recognized her father's big brown horse and his steady coachman in sober livery, the down-town outfit of the financier, who, below Fourteenth Street, was simplicity itself. Mr. Carstairs, with a preoccupied air, got out and ascended the gangway. The official in charge at the top of it, who would have barred the way to a lesser man, smiled and waved the magnate into his daughter's embraces. Everything insensibly yielded to the subtle power of this ruler of the destinies of men. Helen, as she drew out of the lax clasp of the paternal arm, felt a thrill of her old pride in him; a sense of despair that she was nevermore to be his chosen

companion for a voyage; a sharp pang of resentment at the image of the absent interloper of their peace.

"It was too good of you to find time to come, papa!" she exclaimed, turning to nod to the secretary who accompanied him. "Who knows when we shall be together again!"

"Yes, there is a board of directors waiting for me now," said Mr. Carstairs abstractedly. "Of course, you will be all right, my dear. Foster has seen to everything, and Miss Bleecker will—ah. Miss Bleecker, here you are; glad to see you looking so fit for the voyage. Nothing to speak of, though, a crossing in this monster. Wish I were getting away myself. I'm off now, Helen, my dear. Wish you good luck and a good time generally!"

"It won't be with you and the 'Sans Peur,' father," exclaimed the girl, with filling eyes.

"Well, well, we did get along pretty well last cruise, didn't we? I was to tell you," he added, lowering his tone, "that if you are in the humor for it, in the Spring—in the humor, mind you, we'll be out, probably in March,

and take you and Miss Bleecker on at Villefranche, or anywhere you like."

"Thank you, sir," said Helen, rigid in a moment, her eyes dried of moisture.

"Think it over, my dear! You'll find it better worth while."

He kissed her again on the side of the cheek, missing her lips somehow, and was gone. Helen hardly saw his spare figure in the topcoat that seemed too large for it, so quickly the crowd closed behind him. She was conscious of impatience with Foster, who stood there bowing in his sleek importance as the millionaire's confidential man, extending his dampish fingers for good-by. The party who had come to see her off sprinkled their final farewells with a few banal last remarks and disappeared. Miss Bleecker, serenely proud, took her station by the taffrail in a place where no acquaintance or reporter could fail to note her among the "well-known people sailing this morning." Helen was at last alone.

Alone as she had never felt before, in her five-and-twenty years of active, independent life. A gap in the double row of passengers crowding to the rail forward gave her an

opportunity. Slipping in, she looked down upon upturned, ivory-tinted faces massed together like those on a Chinese screen; at the windows of the company's rooms, also crowded with gazers, but saw nobody she knew.

Already the mighty ship began to stir in her water-bed. When she ceased motion again, Helen would be over three thousand miles from home, and the memories of this last trying year. It seemed to her there was not one soul ashore to care whether she went or stayed. Was this worth living for, even as she had lived?

A voice smote upon her ear. It issued from a girl jammed in next to her—a girl younger than herself, extremely pretty, flashily attired, recklessly unconventional. Hers was what Helen recognized to be a Southern voice, low of pitch and soft of cadence, but just now strained to the utmost to make itself audible to a young man in the act of forcing his way through the resistant crowd, to reach the edge of the outer pier from which the ship was now swinging off. To further accentuate her presence among the departing, the young lady was waving a small American flag.

"Jo-oh-n! Oh! Mr. Glynn! Look up! Here I am! Up here!"

Helen started electrically, for it was *her* John Glynn, and none other, whom this unknown person was thus shamelessly appropriating! He, whom she had been yearning to catch a glimpse of, who she was convinced must know from the papers that she was sailing by this steamer. He, who she had felt sure was in some hidden corner looking after her, although, by her behest, they might not again hold speech one with the other!

"Got here only this minute. Best I could do!" shouted John Glynn back to the stranger, a smile lighting his handsome, manly face.

"Never mind! I understand! Good-by!"

A flower shot down amid the crowd. Several men affected to jump for it, but John Glynn caught it and put it in his coat. His gaze never left Helen's neighbor; to her his eyes were upturned, his hat was waved. In a flash, Miss Carstairs had drawn out of sight and fled within.

She found Miss Bleecker already extended upon the couch in her own stateroom, taking tea, the door opened between, whilst Eulalie,

kneeling before steamer trunks and bags, was littering everything near-by with luxurious belongings.

Helen accepted a cup of tea, changed her street costume for a long, close-fitting brown ulster with a sable toque and boa, in which Eulalie told her she was *parfaitement bien mise;* and, escaping again to the deck, walked up and down a comparatively clear space until the "Baltic" was well down the bay. Then, fairly tired, but unwilling to face Miss Bleecker's chatter, she found a chair forward, where it was not likely she would sit again during the voyage, and with a wisp of brown chiffon drawn close over her face, abandoned herself to melancholy thought.

So this was the end of John Glynn's lamenting for her loss! She, not he, had been faithful to the love they had shared so fondly for a little while, in which she had no longer dared indulge with him. This was the way he had accepted her decision that they must try to forget each other, finally.

During the one week of their secret engagement she had felt immeasurable happiness. But every moment of closer contact with her young love, a boy in world's knowl-

edge beside herself, though of her own age in actual years, convinced her of the fatal mistake she had made in believing she could give up her present life for him, and clog his career by an early marriage. So she had broken the bond ruthlessly, and her father had never known of its existence. And his consolation so quickly found! Helen's lip curled disdainfully. Some girl he had met in his boarding-house; the kind of thing he had been accustomed to before Miss Carstairs treated her jaded taste to his virile freshness and charming looks, his masterful reliance upon himself, his willingness to take her, poor or rich! The type of girl she had seen in the tumultuous moment beside the rail was puzzling. Not a lady, according to her artificialized standard, but having the frank assurance and belief in herself that had attracted Helen to John Glynn, with a something of good breeding underneath. Cheaply dressed, cheap mannered, perhaps, ignorant of what Miss Carstairs considered elemental necessities of training, but never vulgar.

But whatever the rival, the hurt was that Glynn cared for Helen no more, while she cared just the same. What a fool she had

been to believe that masculine fidelity survives the blows of fate!

Masked in her brown veil, Helen sat in her corner, turning this bitter morsel upon her tongue, her eyes vaguely resting upon the passing show of passengers as they came straying up on deck to make the best of a fine afternoon while getting out to sea. Impatiently casting aside her unwelcome thoughts, she tried to interest herself in these people, to speculate upon their identity, purpose, and personality, with the usual rather poor returns, since a ship's company assembled at first view has always the most depressing influence upon the looker-on. Beside her, upon one of the rare seats of a liner that belong to nobody, she espied a shabby little man, in an overcoat like a faded leaf, drop down furtively, then seeing no one inclined to disturb him, relax his muscles and, taking off an ancient, wide-brimmed felt hat, look about him with a beaming smile, prepared for full enjoyment of the hour and scene.

Something in the artless buoyancy of his manner, his meek acceptance of a modest place in life, his indifference to the considera-

tions that oftenest vexed the souls of Miss Carstairs' acquaintances upon making any sort of public appearance before their fellow-beings, struck her with an approach to approval. Her glance toward him was met in the same spirit of prompt return that follows patting upon the head a friendly dog.

"Beautiful weather we're having to go out in, ma'am," he said. "I'm kind of glad to settle down in this quiet corner 'n see the last o' my native land. I reckoned I was in no one's way occupying this little bench a bit. Because, you see, I've walked and walked, inspecting the White Star leviathan, everywhere they'd let me set a foot, till I'm about worn out. Talk about 'seeing New York City'! It's not a patch on this ship for making a man feel his lower limbs, if you'll excuse the expression before a lady. Why, she's a wonder, ma'am, a marvel, and there's literally no end to her. I find myself saying at intervals, 'Thank God, I've lived to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and what's more, to cross it in a floating Waldorf-Astoria,' for so it looks to me!"

"You are fond of the water, then?" said Helen, surprised at her own affability, but

on the whole too wretched to care for risks.

"Well, ma'am, I've, so to say, some little experience. I resided formerly in Norfolk, Virginia, and went round to Baltimo, Maryland, on several trips by sea. Know Baltimo, ma'am? Can't exactly compare it to New York, I reckon, but still it's a fine city. Celebrated for its monuments, canvasbacks, and pretty girls, the saying used to be. Worn't dead stuck on canvasbacks myself, though; got overfed with them on my father's plantation when I was a lad, preferred bacon and greens any day in the year. But I'll give in to the praise of Baltimo women to my last breath. Married one of 'em, in fact, an' if God ever sent an angel into a man's life, 'twas she."

Miss Carstairs, to her surprise, detected simultaneously with a tender adoring look coming upon his withered face, a suspicion of moisture in her interlocutor's eyes. She sat up, felt that here was something so out of the way as to verge upon impropriety, made a movement to depart, and finally concluded to remain where she was.

"Yes, ma'am, she was too good for me, or any man. Born among the best, as the say-

ing is, and I, one of the small potatoes in the heap. 'Tisn't any wonder I should be thinking of her to-day, the way she wanted all her life to go to Europe and never dreamed of managing to get there."

"I hope this thought won't spoil your own pleasure in the journey," Helen said, embarrassed to find an answer.

"Oh! no, ma'am, no chance of that. Why, she's been with me in spirit ever since we parted, ten years ago, an' I always feel as if she was sharing things. She'd need a good deal to make up to her for the hardships she had with me. You see, I was first leftenant of infantry, just come out o' the war, 'n 'bout as bare o' money as when I came into the world, I reckon, when I met her first off in Baltimo, where I was lookin' for a job. I was bred up as a drug clerk, and so was glad to take a place in a poor little store, 'n we began life together in one room of a boarding-house, 'n a hall bedroom at that! She, mind you, was a general's daughter of the real old Maryland first chop stock, but as poor as me. After her father was killed at Gettysburg, you see, her mother went to pickling for a living, 'n 'twas hard work, with

two other daughters on her hands, neither one o' them likely to marry much, being the kind the Lord makes homely for reasons of His own. My wife, now, was a beauty, no mistaking her! I never understood how she came to take up with me, 'n when I asked her why, she said she was just tired o' pickles, anyway! That was only her fun, ma'am; we had to have a little, to make the wheels go round. Please excuse me for taking the liberty of talking so sociably. We Southerners have that way, I reckon, and, besides, it seemed like my heart was so full of wife today, I had to say something to somebody, or break a trace."

Miss Carstairs hesitated, then gave way to an unusual impulse, arising as she spoke.

"I must thank you, rather, for having reminded me that all men don't forget. I am sure you deserved all the happiness you had with her, and I hope there is a great deal of it still left in life for you."

"Well, now, ma'am, that's beautifully said. But I won't let you go without knowing that, though I've come to it by a long, hard way, my luck has turned at last, and the only trouble is that she's not here to share it.

The long years after we moved south to Alabama (where I'd an opening, and after a while set up for myself), when wife toiled and moiled for me—when we lost all the children that were born to us, but the last one—how she used to sit in the evenings and read about English cathedrals and Stonehenge, and the like! She didn't seem to care so much about visiting Italy and Paris and the Riviera, but Switzerland tickled her awfully. She had a picture of Mont Blanc on top of a work-box. When I think how cheap the post cards are in these days, I do wish wife could have had a lot to paste in an album that she kept. She always said I was to take daughter, if we ever got money enough for two to cross on, and that she would stay at home. And now, the money's come, enough for all of us, and I'm taking daughter, just as she said, and we're to see England and she isn't! I tell you, ma'am, things are sorted out unevenly by our good Lord!"

Miss Carstairs carried into her cabin the wistfulness of the gentle old face, the irresistible conviction of his honesty. What, in the beginning, had tempted her to mock, now

laid forcible hold of her better nature, and impelled her to gentler thoughts.

A sharp awakening was the rencounter with Miss Bleecker's apprehensions as to where she should sit at table, and the effervescence of that lady's regrets that the parties with whom she had counted upon being included, were all "made up." Helen recalled previous voyages under the ægis of her distinguished father, where their table was the one most desired by social pretenders, with its *plats* and wines served from his private stores, its aura of plutocratic exclusiveness in which revolved obsequious stewards! She winced at thought of glory fled, but while Miss Bleecker enlarged upon the neglect of the secretary, Foster, in not having arranged this matter for them, reflected bitterly that Foster, trimming his sails to the wind of Fortune, was now the devotee of the new Mrs. Carstairs' whims, and unless especially ordered so to do, would be likely to make no effort for the rebellious stepdaughter's advancement.

Affecting indifference to the detail in question, she found herself at dinner assigned to a small table in one corner of the saloon, of

which five of the nine seats were already filled, when Miss Bleecker, sparkling intermittently in jet, sailed ahead of her charge, and motioned Helen into place beside her. A steward, who had identified the ladies, came hurrying to overtake them, and express his hope that Miss Carstairs would be satisfied with his selection for her, assuring her, in a whisper, that he had taken every care that she should have only the "best" people as her comrades.

Helen, who had not yet sat down, smiled at the reassuring promise. The whisper, overheard by two of the gentlemen unfolding their napkins opposite, produced an answering smile. Impossible to resist a voucher so bestowed! Simultaneously the two men arose and stood till Miss Carstairs had taken her revolving chair and was safely installed beside her chaperon. The table was now complete, save for the seat at the end and that at its right adjoining Helen's.

Soup had hardly been placed before them when the intended occupants of the vacant places resolved themselves into a couple, at sight of whom a cold tremor passed into Miss Carstairs' limbs—for they were none other

than the mild little man with whom she had been talking on the deck, and the girl who had thrown John Glynn a flower!

The old fellow had made scant preparation for the ceremonial meal of the day on shipboard. His kind face shone with soap and water, while a thin lock of gray hair was laboriously trained by the same medium over his bald crown. His mustard-colored "tourist suit" of tweed, the red tie and rumpled cheviot shirt, might, indeed, have served a noble earl upon his travels through an American drawing-room; but whatever the appearance of her sire, it was at once lost to sight in the radiant prettiness and extraordinary self-possession of the girl who accompanied him.

A goddess of liberty in height, with the complexion of a pink-and-white balsam flower, and rippled hair of gold worn parted in the middle and extending outward in exaggerated wings; her admirable young form was attired in cheap China silk of an azure tint incorporating transparencies of white lace that revealed a dazzling neck and arms. Decked with profuse jewelry of the inexpensive sort, she stood for a moment where

the rest of the company could fully profit by the apparition before it went into eclipse in her allotted seat!

The attention of their table, hitherto indirectly converging upon the fine lines and *pâte tendre* coloring of Miss Carstairs, now shifted its focus to a point not to be forsaken for the remainder of the voyage (an example promptly to be followed by the rest of the passengers, the officers and personnel of the big ship in general). The newcomer possessed, in spite of her extreme youth, the manner of some histrionic star who has the conscience of her calling in producing effects not to be forfeited by a moment's neglect of opportunity. Her present entrance had the full effect of a sweep down to the footlights, to pause with one hand upon the desk from which the heroine is wont to dash off her little notes to the leading man, whilst reading them aloud to the audience.

But withal, so childlike were her contours, so joyous her appeal for notice, one felt that her vanity might still be the innocent belief of a little girl secure of her own interestingness to the public, when she comes into a roomful of her mother's guests.

All eyes following her movements, the stranger surveyed the saloon briefly, and spoke to her companion with good-humored authority.

"Just what I told you, Dad. The older gentlemen all sit in the end seats, and that's the place for you."

"Now, Posey, child," came in audible rejoinder, "none of your nonsense, but just do as I said, and take the end yourself. Nobody wants to see an old fossil like me put forward when they can get a nice young lady to look at. Sit down, right away, and I'll just slip in beside this lady. Why, ma'am," he added, interrupting himself with a face of glad recognition in identifying Miss Carstairs, "if it ain't you, and I'm real pleased to meet up with you again! A needle in a haystack, I was thinking myself among all these strange folk. And you'll be such prime company for Posey, here. Let me make you acquainted with my daughter, Miss Pamela Winstanley, of Alison's Cross Roads, Alabama."

Miss Carstairs inclined her head toward the beaming newcomer, and almost immediately turned to close converse in an under-

tone with Miss Bleecker, who was herself occupied in digesting unpleasant first impressions.

For, after fortifying herself with soup, and ordering a whiskey and soda for digestion's sake, the chaperon had sent her eagle glance around the board with this result:

Of the five gentlemen installed before their arrival, two were mentally labelled, "Hopeless, old, grumpy, no doubt, of no possible use to us." Another, "A mere larky boy, not knowing him, must keep him down," and the pair who had arisen and stood at their approach, "An Englishman, badly bored, good figure, eyes and teeth, has been, or is, in the army; the Frenchman with him, rather like Mephistopheles, might be amusing, but will, of course, be sea-sick all the way over. A poor lot, and just wait till I get at that head steward and find out what he means by it!"

CHAPTER II

"My dear Helen, I really may as well tell you at once, that I don't like your walking alone, in the dark, down on that lower deck that looks steeragy, where there are no chairs, and the men go to smoke after dinner."

"Do they? I hadn't noticed," said Helen, indifferently.

She had come into their rooms with a brighter look upon her face, born of the delicious swoop of salt air upon it, and the sound of that churning music of the waves with which the sea rewards the good ship when she takes her ocean crests easily and settles down to her grand Atlantic stride.

"I lost you, after dinner, when I was sitting on the boat deck with Mrs. Vereker, hearing all about her daughter's divorce and her son's appendicitis. No wonder the poor woman goes abroad for a change. And, really, I'm glad, after all, we are not with them at table, since she can talk of nothing else, and much as one may feel for a friend's

troubles, it *is* nicer to hear a little about other people's, too! I was telling Mrs. Vereker—though, dear me, she hardly lets one speak—how dreadfully they had served us about the people they put us with, and, my dear, what do you think? It never does to judge by first appearances at sea, for as it turns out, Mr. Vereker—who is that kind of a fussing, Miss Nancyish man, and loves to study the passenger list—has discovered that every soul at our table, except those dreadful Southerners, has a title! The one with glasses, who speaks such funny English, is a German Graf, of a family of fabulous antiquity, who has been to Washington to see his ambassador about sending one of his sons to learn agriculture in America. The one who gobbles so, and complains of the draught on his back, and had the port shut, is Prince Zourikoff, a Russian savant, who has written a book called 'Études sur la cause de la décadence des peuples.' The saucy boy who went in for a flirtation with that Winstanley girl, is Mr. Vane, a son of Lord Kennington, whom they sent to Canada for a year to get him out of mischief at home. The really interesting person is—who do you suppose?—

the man opposite you, Lord Clandonald, whose story was in all the newspapers a year ago. His wife, a beautiful Miss Darien, behaved scandalously, yet was so clever in tricking everybody, it was hard to get the divorce. But he got rid of her at last, and then went around the world. Doesn't look like a man of that sort, does he? Rather shy, I should say, and hold-off, but a splendid figure. The Frenchman is actually the famous Mariol, whose books are my delight, though he's a wretch the way he writes about women. He's Clandonald's great chum, and they have been travelling together."

Helen's face had lighted.

"I know only one or two books of Mariol's —essays principally, but they are perfect of their kind——"

"I advise you to keep to the essays," said Miss Bleecker, dryly. "He has an enormous reputation in the literary world, and one likes to meet them, now and again, if they are not frumps."

"And provided he is not sea-sick," said Helen, smiling.

"In this boat, in an ordinary sea, there'll be no excuse for it. Why, one hardly knows

we are moving. To return to Clandonald, don't you think people one reads about and hears about are always disappointing? I don't say there was anything wrong attributed to *him;* they said he was rather Quixotic in his treatment of the worthless creature, who had to give up his name and go under. But he is so much like other people. Nothing to show he was in such a notorious divorce suit—Helen, what are you smiling at?"

"The thrilling thought that I had M. de Mariol to mix my salad dressing," replied Miss Carstairs.

"Was it good? I am always careful the first day out. Oh! I must tell you about those queer Dicks, the Southerners. It seems that Lord and Lady Channel Fleet came on board at the last minute, and took quite an ordinary room—that heavy-looking red-faced man and the dowdy woman in big turquoise earrings, who sat at the captain's table—they had to have those two seats, so the Winstanleys were transferred to us. If we had only secured the Channel Fleets, we should have been *so* complete! Perhaps they and Clandonald don't speak, though, and the captain found it out, or the purser, who always hears

all the gossip. At any rate, we've got to put up with the Winstanleys, and I'll give you my frank opinion, Helen, that before this voyage is over we'll have cause to rue the day when we laid eyes on them. The old man is simply too absurd. Treats her as if she were a princess and he her courier. How you could stand his babbling in your ear, I can't imagine. But she! she! The worst specimen of the travelling American who makes one blush for one's country when abroad."

"One must own to her good looks," Helen interpolated bravely.

Miss Bleecker snorted.

"My dear, that is unworthy of you. A Twenty-third Street shop-girl would be ashamed to do her hair like that; and her frock—bought in stock, and fitted in half a day, probably. But even that doesn't count beside her phenomenal assurance and self-conceit. Fancy now, her addressing a remark to *me*, before I had spoken to her. I never heard such a string of words from a young person in my life, and to take it upon her to entertain the whole table! It really silenced *me*. One comfort is that everybody

will put her down as I did, and sooner or later she'll be left severely to herself."

"I noticed that Lord Clandonald and M. de Mariol seemed much amused, and the others couldn't keep their eyes from her," said truthful Helen, who had her own cause for blank wonderment at the further development of John Glynn's acquaintances.

"Oh! that is the provoking part of men," answered Miss Bleecker, tossing her head; "give them a pretty face and a forward manner, and they'll pretend to be entertained. I'm very sorry, Helen, but if that girl doesn't take my hint and tone down a great deal, I shall be under the necessity of making a complaint about our seats. It isn't possible the line wouldn't wish to place your father's daughter at least *respectably* at table. These Winstanleys are, in my opinion, most suspicious people, and I have asked Mr. Vereker to make very particular inquiries and find out if I am not right. He says that when she came into the saloon, every neck on our side was stretched looking after her, and he quite agrees with me—no, Mrs. Vereker agreed with me, her husband was weak enough to say what were the odds when a

girl is so deuced pretty—that there must be something wrong."

The latter part of Miss Bleecker's monologue was spoken to space, since Miss Carstairs, melting away into her own room, had closed the door between them.

Helen found Mlle. Eulalie sitting on the foot of the cane settee, comfortably warming her toes at a small apparatus of shining brass, which, with its red lamp inside, presented a fair semblance of the forsaken fires of home. Upon the bed lay her own satin quilt, her own pillows of embroidered linen were prepared invitingly, her peignoir billowed across the couch. Upon every side gleamed and glittered the little objects of cut-glass, tortoise-shell and gold which she had heaped in the balance against John Glynn's love, along with a hundred other manifestations of the outward and visible signs of a solvent existence. To-night she was strangely repelled by them. She made a motion to go out again into the half darkness of that same deserted lower deck, where she could walk to the rush of the wind and the inspiriting swish of the water. She wanted to be alone with her thoughts, to bid a last good-by to the love she

had known for a little happy while. Then the image of Miss Posey Winstanley, with her assured smile and undaunted self-satisfaction, came to her with a new shock, and, turning back, she let Eulalie take off her dress and brush her hair, surrendering herself inertly to the warmth and perfume of materialism, and trying to think she was better so.

Far into the night Helen lay, physically at rest, inhaling the pure air from her open window, feeling the gentle uplift of the sea as the huge bulk of the ship faintly answered to its impulse, listening to the bells challenging one another from afar, but she could not sleep. Tirelessly her memory went over every incident of her acquaintanceship with Glynn, and of the virtual break with her father since the terrible substitution of the woman she suspected into her old place at home. To the last she had kept a brave front, and no one should ever know what this past year had cost her. She was leaving America, without temptation to return. The secret glimmering hope that had kept alight within her, that some day John Glynn and she might come together again, was now

finally extinguished. It was as if a new era of life were opening, and the question was, how best should she shape it?

For the twentieth time Miss Carstairs had come around to the knottiest problem of all those that kept her wakeful in her giant cradle of the sea. She was wondering how duty and dignity might combine to inspire her action toward her successor in Glynn's affections. Her chief apprehension regarding Pamela Winstanley, was that John Glynn should have made her ever so little aware of that prior bond. A cold terror had possessed her at thought of the exuberant creature sharing or even suspecting her sacred secret. But in the girl's helter-skelter attempts at speech with every one at table, she had given no hint that she had previously heard of Miss Carstairs. Helen could only hope that Glynn's name would never come up between them. And, at this point, a soft, swabbing sound and the tread of muffled feet upon the deck beneath her window, gave notice that the sailors were at their early morning tasks. The weird, self-pitying note of the parrot in a cabin hard by seemed to grow fainter and more dreamlike. Turning wearily

upon her pillows, she let sleep take her into its merciful embrace.

"Certainly, Mariol, you have found your American types ready to hand upon this voyage," Lord Clandonald was saying, as the two men walked up and down with their cigars upon the deck decried by Miss Carstairs' chaperon. "The most obvious one is, of course, the astonishing young person who aroused us from the spiritual lethargy of a first meal at sea, when one is always on guard not to be too accessible."

"She is like one of those Eastern shops, where everything is in the window," Mariol answered. "But adorably fresh and naïve and pretty. No other continent could produce her than the wide and liberal one we are just quitting."

"Might we but keep her to ourselves!" said Clandonald, mockingly. "But I foresee that she will be the wonder and the joy of the entire ship's company on our run over. And the mild old boy who retires into the background to give his Wonder every chance! I rather like the old boy, I think."

"My own taste would be for the young

lady who is protected by Buddha reincarnate, in the person of the disapproving chaperon. Her beauty is rarer, more subtle, than the other's; she is clearly of the *fine fleur* of the American aristocracy of dollars. I suspect a Colonial ancestor somewhere, and you observed that the chaperon did not disdain us too much, to let fall a hint or two concerning the custom of splendor in her charge's life. When they find you out, Clandonald, I'll wager the sun will promptly shine between the clouds for you."

"The old woman is in the apologetic stage for America, and that's enough to give me a strong disgust for her. Let them be anything that's real, and I'm ready to meet Americans 'hands across the sea.' But the ones that affect to decry their nationality, to convince us that they are of a small, segregated class that stand on higher ground than the rest, are abhorrent to me. Clearly, Buddha's protégée belongs to that class, and will not tarry to let us become aware of it."

"Grant that my Mdlle. Hélène—for I don't know her other name—is both beautiful and finely bred, and I will abandon you the rest of her sisterhood. She is full of an exquis-

ite intellectuality, but it would not prevent her loving if her heart were awakened—and if I am not mistaken, it has already been awakened. Imagine a young girl, *chez nous,* with that expression in her eyes, and yet that delicate restraint of manner. I should like to know the fair Hélène's history."

"That you might dissect her with admirable grace in a feuilleton that *tout Paris* would read and applaud—and—forget her the next hour, in a new enthusiasm."

"Better to possess all the enthusiasms than none, old chap. I am really in despair over your failure to be aroused by the infinite variety of the diversions offered to you in this journey of ours that, alas! must end too soon."

"There is one pleasure that has never palled on me, and that is the society of my travelling companion. You are the ideal one in many respects, Mariol; but if I could point out one virtue more than another that distinguishes you in that character, it is the letting a man enjoy all his bad humors, his fads, his follies, if you will, unchecked and unbridled. I have sometimes basely suspected you of sacrificing me in order to make copy

of my infirmities. But, at any rate, I have enjoyed blessed liberty, and, whatever the result, I have profited by the semblance of a perfect tact and consideration."

"A roundabout way of warning me not to intrude my advice upon you now. But seriously, Clandonald, and at any risk, I must tell you that you need rousing. That past of yours, unsavory as it was through no fault of yours, has been long enough decently interred for you to forget it, and to recreate your life's happiness. One can't be sore always, any more than we can love always, or mourn always. And you, of all men the one best fitted to wear the yoke of your staid British virtues, to serve your country and your king at home, to be a model landlord, a husband and a paterfamilias, *comme il y en a peu!* For heaven's sake, accept the blessed opportunity of your present freedom, and make up for that wretched first mistake. You aren't happy, you have no ambition, no purpose, no zest in living. Get yourself a wife."

"This from Mariol, the scoffer, the celibate! My dear fellow, I forgive you your trespass upon forbidden ground, because I

know you are sincere. But you forget one small, important fact. The person who bore my name, and her various works of evil, have so depleted my finances that, had I the courage, I haven't the wherewithal to hawk my wares in the marriage mart. I wonder if you know what it costs to keep a Lady Clandonald in the enjoyment of the domestic atmosphere of which you speak. I know to my cost. Unless she were a beautiful savage, content to retire with me to one of those isles of the South Sea poor Louis Stevenson idealized, I couldn't even give her a season in town, or a trip to Paris or Homburg, much less races, and all the bridge a woman needs; and so there'd be the devil to pay, you see. If she would set up a bonnet-shop, or a place for horribly dear frocks, and keep me on the proceeds—! but otherwise, I'm as poor as a rat, Mariol, and haven't your resources, or royalties, remember."

"A small matter, my dear lad, with the ever-continuing flood of American dollars pouring from West to East through the facile clasp of the fair beings by whom we are presently surrounded. And you would not run great risks. There is this to be said

for them, that American ladies rarely degenerate into either bores, dupes or pieces of household machinery: 'Le familier vulgaire, utile et sans bouquet, comme le vin qu'on boit avec l'eau.' They progress with the epoch and the civilization that claim them. Take—as a matter of illustration merely—either of the two young women who grace our board."

"As a matter of illustration, merely," answered Clandonald, laughing, "I'd prefer to take the sweet child of nature, combining, with the vulgarity of a powdered nose, the eyes of an intelligent cherub recently short-coated."

"As you please," said Mariol, arching his brows resignedly. "My choice for you would have been the fine-grained daughter of the Puritans with hair the color of a hazelnut, the flat, straight back, and resolute figure gowned by Paquin. I dare say both ladies are accessible to what you have to offer them, or that either would soon fit into place in the long walk at Beaumanoir, among those strutting white peacocks against a background of clipped yews and sun-warmed ancient brick. No American girl could resist

that walk and those white peacocks, Clandonald, take my word for it."

"Then marry one yourself, and I'll let the place to you for a song."

"I have still to see Tibet," answered the other, stopping to light a fresh cigar.

Their talk ended in a discussion wide afield from the subject with which it had begun. But when Mariol turned in, it was with a throb of secret satisfaction that he had been able, in the darkness, and apparently *à l'improviste,* to wing in the direction of his friend a shaft he had long held in reserve for him.

He had been with Clandonald, side by side, wading through the miserable mire of his divorce case, and rejoiced when he saw him rid for ever of the creature who had dragged him down. The two men had met first in South Africa, while Clandonald was lying ill of enteric, and Mariol, coming upon him by accident in the course of his own explorations for observation and adventure at the seat of war, had nursed him with the gentleness and devotion of a woman, until he was out of danger and ready for the voyage home. During his first convalescence, Clandonald

had received the plainly unwelcome news of his wife's intended journey out, "to look after her dear old boy." The arrival of her errant ladyship, followed by the untoward discovery of her real motives in making this heroic effort, and the hardly concealed scandal of her companionship on the voyage, precipitated a relapse of Clandonald's malady, and the ultimate severance, some two years later, of his heavy marriage bond, borne during the lifetime of a boy who died through her neglect.

In all this dreary time Mariol had stood by him and held him up. The brilliant mocker, the professed skeptic of all tenderness apart from the metaphysics of the sex question, had developed into the best of hard-luck friends; and their agreement to travel together after Clandonald was free and had left the army proved more than a success.

Now they were drifting homeward again, Mariol to his boulevards and the fond congenial life of Paris, Clandonald—to what? Mariol, with his keen insight and ready sympathy, saw that his friend was returning to England, restless, unsatisfied, out of tune with his future surroundings; well in body

and healthy in his mind, indeed, but in no humor to pick up his life from where his late partner had cast it, like a jewel, into wayside dirt.

Mariol had hoped much from their visit to America, where they had found themselves, during the latter part of the season at Newport, subjected to the overpowering hospitality of the leaders of the great world. But although Clandonald's antecedents were as well known and familiarly discussed there, as in England and on the Continent, and there had been displayed no disposition on the part of society to visit his evil fortune upon him, the young man passed but abstractedly through the ordeal of charms and graces, defiled before his gaze, during the hours when the world that entertains is in evidence. Mariol sometimes wondered whether his friend would not have been more easily consoled in an atmosphere less surcharged with the art of pleasing.

The moment he had laid eyes upon Miss Carstairs, whose patronymic he was yet to learn, it had flashed upon the Frenchman's active brain that here was the solution of his perplexities. That the girl met so thor-

oughly his own exacting taste in externals, seemed to him a convincing proof she would be the ideal angel to step down into Clandonald's troubled pool and make it clear. Her looks, age, good breeding, reserve of bearing, and evident fortune, added to the fact that she, too, had in her eyes the shadow of past sorrow, left the kind fictionist no doubt of his own perspicacity in selection. He had addicted himself to the task of making friends with her, with a promptitude facilitated by his secret hopes, and Clandonald's indifference proved the more provoking in that it bore every aspect of probable enduringness.

Mariol fell asleep, that memorable first night at sea, congratulating himself that his cares in connection with matters of sentiment were so purely perfunctory, and that whatever the issue out of Clandonald's impassivity, no personal interest in any one of the disturbing sex could ever afford his mentor other than the emotion of a scientist who skewers a new butterfly for his microscope.

CHAPTER III

THERE was to be no complexity attending the position taken by Miss Pamela Winstanley, commonly called Posey, in the consideration of her fellow-passengers of the "Baltic." From the first day out, as has been said, every one aboard became a prey to the absorbing interest created by her daily movements, sayings and doings. Beyond the fact that she was travelling with her father, a Mr. Herbert Winstanley, sometime of the Army of the Confederate States, presumably a person of very moderate social place and fortunes, the antecedents of the radiant young beauty were unknown, and she was accepted upon her face value alone. It was indisputable that, whenever she appeared, conversation centered upon her to the exclusion of more serious topics. And, in return, Miss Winstanley lavished her effervescing good graces with impartiality upon all admirers in attendance. The honors of her smiles and pretty sayings were shared

alike by Lord Clandonald and any minor individual of the impressible sex, who might chance to be on hand. Jolly old Lord Channel Fleet, resembling Santa Claus with his roseate face and white fringe of a beard, found himself vying for her favors with a succession of American college youths in sweaters, one of whom, famed in university circles as a thrower of the hammer, stood about in attitudes expressive of rank jealousy, whenever his sportive lordship was at her side. Lady Channel Fleet, indeed, was known to be nervous lest the threatening young man should do something dreadful to her liege.

Miss Bleecker, Mrs. Vereker, and sundry mothers of unentertaining daughters who struggled into their deck-chairs without assistance and walked with each other the diurnal mile, looking as if nothing would induce them to descend to the companionship of the supporting sex, formed a number of ingenious theories to account for the fair Pamela. She was a milliner's forewoman, going out to secure fashions for Alison's Cross Roads. She was a dashing divorcee, who had resumed her maiden name. She had

been a barmaid in California, an artist's model in New York, an assistant washerwoman in the Klondyke, had tried on cloaks in a leading haberdashery of Chicago—in all of which capacities there was somebody aboard who had known somebody else who had actually seen her! But of suppositions concerning the charmer, the most popular was that she had sung on the local stage somewhere in the South, and was now going abroad to study for comic opera. For in addition to other devices for the bewilderment of mere man, Miss Winstanley was found to possess a fascinating gift of rendering little Creole chansonettes that conjured up the warm velvet-like touch of Southern air, the region of palm and pine and mocking-birds, of orange flowers and Cherokee roses, and the love spells lingering around it. Then she could croon "Mammy" songs, of a negress hushing her nursling, in a way to bring tears to the eyes of most hardened listeners. And between the songs and croonings she would describe scenes, and impersonate actors, with a natural fire and pathos that are rarely taught or teachable. But of this accomplishment she was more chary than the rest, and

there were those heard to declare that, on one occasion on deck, she had sung tears into her own eyes, and abruptly stopped, declaring she did not care to do it before more than one or two. The incident being repeated to Miss Bleecker, that inveterate lady declared it to be but a clever bit of acting to whet expectation of future appearances behind the footlights.

Amid the successes of his daughter's meteoric rise, little Mr. Winstanley prowled about the ship, a solitary and somewhat pathetic figure in his evident belief that self-effacement was the first duty of the parent of such a Phœnix among maidens. Following his abortive reopening of acquaintance with Miss Carstairs, he withdrew into his shell and spoke no more to her. Helen reproached herself that she had not been able to conceal from him the repulsion at first inspired in her by her rival in John Glynn's favor. Old Winstanley's mild twinkle of the eye, the smile playing around his thin lips, gave no hint, however, that his retiring attitude was inspired by offence. He seemed to live apart in a world of his own thoughts

and memories, from which even his Posey's triumphs could not extract him for long.

And Posey, Miss Bleecker to the contrary (who from her end of the table consistently glared down the intruder's right to be), continued to reign in her revolving chair, as the established queen of every meal. Her quips and cranks of fan, her lawless sallies at the expense of those around her, had effectually banished restraint and brought the diverse elements of their party together; even Helen parting with her formality to join in the talk, when convinced by observation that Miss Winstanley knew nothing whatever of her prior acquaintance with John Glynn.

From the beginning, the Honorable Bobby Vane, Lord Kennington's scapegrace boy, had fallen head over ears in love with Posey, and was ready to forfeit his not very brilliant prospects in life to marry her, no matter in what capacity she had previously appeared. Posey laughed at and with the lad, enjoying his off-hand gayety and mischief, and there it began and ended. The Russian savant, under the influence of Miss Winstanley's presence, forgot to grumble about draughts and sauces, and smoothed his grim-

visaged front into affability, answering her in English as choice as M. de Mariol's French. The old German count, proving to be the most kindly and merry of comrades, developed a faculty for telling uproariously funny stories, of which the effect was impaired only by such a strange mispronunciation of the English tongue that his auditors were kept supernaturally grave in the effort not to smile at him, and therefore did not smile at all.

A volume of Mariol's clever (and happily innocuous) short stories having been produced by somebody and put into circulation on the ship, Miss Winstanley had familiarized herself with them, and was engaged at odd moments in translating the little *chef d'œuvres* of style, with Bobby Vane, in whose imagination a book of any kind, save a betting book, loomed larger than an elephant.

Mariol, to whom direct address from casual people upon the subject of his writings was an affliction, had been rather dreading the young lady's comments, and was relieved when she disposed of him thus easily:

"I think they're just lovely, Mr. Mariol,

and am trying to make Mr. Vane agree with me, but he declares they're too jolly dismal and give him the awful blues. After this, when people say they envy me being at table with you, I can truly tell them you don't talk the least bit like your books."

"Mrs. Kipling told me once," said Clandonald, following a laugh at Mariol's expense, "that when a gushing American girl asked how she could endure the brilliancy of a certain chat between her husband and Cecil Rhodes on the Kiplings' veranda in South Africa, she had been puzzled what to answer, because, as a matter of fact, each of these gentlemen had been trying to talk more delightful drivel than the other. What good luck for the rest of us, that great minds *do* unbend in the intimacy of private discourse!"

"If one doesn't talk in brief paragraphs, like those columns printed in American newspapers for busy men to read in elevated trains, one isn't listened to, I find," said the author, ruefully.

"In most countries, nowadays," observed Prince Zourikoff, looking anxiously to see whether the portion of cold braised beef left upon the platter was enough for his liberal

appetite, "the fine arts of conversation and correspondence have both been driven like chaff before the wind of modern restlessness. Nobody converses, few read, friendly communication is achieved by wire or telephone. And as to introducing a serious topic into society—perish the thought! One would be voted a superannuated nuisance."

"I have always thought it the best compliment a man can pay a woman," said Miss Carstairs, blushing a little, "when he talks to her, in earnest, about what dominates his thoughts."

Mariol flashed an appreciative glance at her. Clandonald cried out:

"Heaven defend your sex, my dear lady, if they had to sit still and listen to most men's governing thoughts. And, on the whole, there is nothing so wearing as a person with ideas that have never been applied. To-day, we must think and act, and accomplish or fail, before we talk. And as far as talk goes, it's everybody's plain duty to be amusing and not long."

"To come down before the footlights, and do one's turn, and then drop back again," interpolated Miss Bleecker, with a glance at

the beauty, who was helping Bobby Vane to a baked potato. "You are quite right, Lord Clandonald. It is perfect audacity for any one person, whether clever or insignificant, to attempt to monopolize attention. Everybody else is invariably bored by it, where they are not laughing in their sleeves."

"Have you seen many persons laughing in their sleeves, Miss Bleecker?" asked Posey Winstanley, innocently. "Did they do it when you were young? I always wondered how. Mr. Vane, please stop eating long enough, to let's try laughing in our sleeves at Miss Bleecker. I reckon she'll tell us if it's the real thing."

"There are places, then, where they do say 'I reckon,'" pursued Miss Bleecker, impassively. "You mentioned, Lord Clandonald, how much you were disappointed not to hear more provincialisms of speech in America. I should think Miss Winstanley could give you all you care to collect."

"Did you ever hear, Miss Winstanley," put in Mariol quickly, "the pretty speech made by King William IV about a charming countrywoman of yours, whom some one asked, 'Pray, do you come from that part of

America where they guess and where they calculate?' 'Lady Wellesley comes from where they fascinate,' said the gallant monarch."

Bobby Vane clapped his hands approvingly.

"That's rippin', ain't it, Mr. Mariol! My goodness me, wish I weren't such a duffer at writing things down an' spellin' or I'd make a note of it. What?"

"Come to school at Alison's Cross Roads, Alabama, and we'll teach you how," said Posey.

"Helen, you will find me on the boat-deck by Mrs. Vereker," said Miss Bleecker, majestically arising. "I have had quite enough of this. And I consider it my mission to spend as much time as I can give to poor Mrs. Vereker, prostrated by care and anxiety as she has been, and her husband never allowed to come near her on the voyage."

A light sparkled in the wide-open blue eyes of the ship's charmer, and a smile hovered around her pretty mouth. She was well aware that about the second day out, the critical and finical Mr. Vereker had joined in the universal procession toward her shrine. She had avoided an introduction as long as

possible, compelling her ancient admirer to perform wonders of intrigue and diplomacy, before he was admitted to the privilege of her acquaintance. Since then, he had persecuted her for walks on deck, secured for her white violets, at vast expense, from some one who was taking them out in the ship's ice-box for sale in London; had sent to her table daily tokens of regard, from pats of choice butter, bunches of black Hamburg grapes, and broiled birds, to Southern "pin-money" pickles. Not content with these tangible evidences, Mr. Vereker had promised her a dog, and invited her to motor with them through Touraine. The poor man, who had, in Miss Bleecker's parlance, "no stomach to speak of," was expecting the return of one of his periodical attacks, when he would be forced to go upon milk and Educator biscuits, too enfeebled to walk the deck and flirt, and wished to make the most of his well moments; but, so far, Miss Winstanley had been constantly engaged with others, and could not yield him the tête-à-tête desired.

Miss Bleecker, enlisted under the standard of a complaining wife, was gratified to leave the party, having hurled the final shaft.

Mariol liked the self-control with which Posey turned immediately to other topics, no less than he appreciated the effort Helen Carstairs made to atone for her companion's venom by remaining awhile in conversation that included the girl attacked. The Frenchman, who noted most things passing near him, had been making up his mind that some strong personal reason existed to keep Miss Carstairs in a state of mental self-defence against the attractions of Miss Winstanley. A judgment so clear and cool and fair as Helen's in ordinary matters, he had rarely seen, and he believed her capable of more than the allotted amount of feminine generosity toward those of her own sex. As far as he had been able to gather, she had never before seen or heard of this mysterious young person who had made their voyage so gay. What could the reason be?

It had not escaped him that the Southern girl, taking heed of Helen's low-pitched voice, of her quiet garb and reserved manner among strangers, had profited by them to tone down some of her own extravagances. Already, Miss Winstanley's hair was brushed simply back in a glorious golden sweep, allowing its

natural waves to reveal themselves untortured. Already, the obnoxious blue dress with its lace transparencies, the redundant jewelry had gone into retirement, the young girl appearing at dinner in white blouses as simple as Helen's own. Better than all, she no longer challenged people within earshot with her sentiments and opinions.

From time to time, Mariol had detected passing from her to Helen the glances of homage a very unsophisticated girl bestows upon one she has elected to make her heroine. And, despite this artless worship, Miss Carstairs did not relent in her cool demeanor. She was civil always, considerate often, but never yielding in keeping Miss Winstanley at a distance. The men at their table were unanimously beginning to feel that a girl may win easily in the chief events of such a contest, and yet be badly worsted in the end.

The only one among them who seemed to have preserved indifference on the subject of Posey's wrongs, was the quiet little man in the mustard-colored tweeds, with the cowboy hat of sunburnt felt, who accompanied

the beauty to her meals, but was rarely seen with her elsewhere.

One afternoon, however, she broke away from her cordon of admirers, and finding the old fellow walking alone, linked her arm in his, adjusting her pace to his.

"Why, little girl, what's come to you, that the beaux have left you no better company than mine?" he said, with the jocular homage of his habitual manner to her.

"There isn't much better company than yours, dad, and I'm beginning to find it out," she answered, caressingly.

"Well, well, a compliment from the belle o' the ship! Reckon when I get to London I'll have to be buying myself a new suit, and a dozen o' boiled shirts, though, come to think of it, seems to me I'm no great way behind that Lord Channel Fleet o' yours in the matter of clothes and footwear—regular beetle-crushers, those shoes of his, and his hat an even match for mine."

"He's rather an old dear, anyhow," said Posey; "but I've got another ancient on the string that's too foolish to talk about. That Mr. Vereker—he's dyed and made-up, and always fussing about his digestion. He has

"There isn't much better company than yours' dad." Page 66.

a young doctor travelling with him to give him hypodermics for his nerves, and they're going to some queer place where he'll have to walk barefoot on wet stones, and diet, with a lot of grand dukes and things that he just loves to talk about. Aren't they funny though, these old society men? Imagine you prancing around after young girls!"

"I can't," said her father, simply. "There isn't a woman living, old or young, that could take my fancy away from the girl I won in Baltimo, after the wah. She's my love, the same now as then. You're pretty good-looking, Posey, so people seem to think. But your mother. Lord! She was a beauty, and as soft and gentle as an evenin' breeze."

"I sometimes wish I had her now, daddy. Since I've been eighteen, and everybody's so good to me, I mean. There are such lots of little things a mother could tell me. And to think I was the only child she kept—the very last of your family—and she couldn't have stayed with me! Ah! well, don't mind me, dad, I'm happy enough with you."

"You certainly don't often pull a long face, dearie. If there's anything troubling you, out with it, and let's see if I can't help."

"It's rather a big little secret, daddy. Maybe I oughtn't have kept it so long, but I was ashamed to tell, I reckon. You see nothing like this ever happened to me before."

The old man's faded eyes kindled with sudden fire. He halted her suddenly, facing seaward, and together they leaned over the taffrail.

"Posey, it hasn't got anything to do with John Glynn, has it?" he asked with a tremulous eagerness of joy.

"Yes, daddy."

"He spoke to you before we sailed?"

"Just before. That last evening, at the hotel, when you went off to smoke with the nice old gentleman you fought beside at Seven Pines, and left us sitting in the corridor looking at the people. He said everything that was nice about you, first; how you had been his father's dearest friend, and had helped him through college, and started him in New York, and he loved you dearly, and never could repay the debt. Then he recalled how he and I had known each other as boy and girl, though he always thought of me as nothing but a little kid, until he saw me last

year at home, and just now, in New York. He told me how hard he was working, with scarcely a minute to call his own, and what a tough struggle it would be to get up top, but that he meant to do it, if he lived——"

"And he will—he will!" interrupted Mr. Winstanley, in accents of strong pride. "He didn't tell you, I'll bet, that he never took up my offer to stake him with funds for his expenses in New York, till he got square upon his feet, and that he never drew a blessed cent of it?"

"He said you'd been more than good, but he wouldn't impose on you. You see, daddy, John knows that all these years you've had as much as you could do to keep us going, and have me educated. I suppose he was as surprised as I, when he found you were taking me abroad in style—you extravagant old thing, you!"

"Of course. Of course," murmured Mr. Winstanley, acquiescently. "It does seem extravagant, doesn't it? But we'll manage to make two ends meet, I reckon, if we pinch, afterwards, to make up for it. Go on, Posey, go on. Tell me the rest about you and John. It is music to my ears."

"I thought so, daddy," the girl said, with a tender sigh. "And though I wasn't quite ready to do what he asked me, I couldn't say no. So when he said you and his father had always wanted us two to be married, some day, and would I consider myself engaged to him, until he was ready to give me a home in New York, I just asked him to wait till the next day, and I would telephone my answer before the steamer sailed. And I did. That's what I was doing when you called to me that the carriage was waiting to drive us to the pier. I was shut up in the telephone booth at the hotel saying 'yes' to John."

"And you never gave the poor lad a chance to see you face to face again?" exclaimed her father, every wrinkle of his face luminous with satisfaction at the news.

"Ye-es," said Posey, "I saw him for a minute over the rail of the steamer. He just rushed down from his office the minute he could get off. I'd told him I'd write him all the usual things by the pilot-boat, and from Queenstown; and he'd laughed and said he'd have to be satisfied with that! You mustn't expect John and me to be silly, father, for we aren't a bit, either of us. I ought to tell

you that he's been in love with another girl, and it didn't turn out well, and he put her out of his thoughts forever."

"So that was what ailed the lad last Spring when I went North on that business of the mine? I might have guessed it, poor boy, he was blue as indigo. Well, it was handsome of him to tell you, daughter, and, my word for it, your marriage will be just as happy as if he hadn't taken that other little notion before he saw that you were the real girl for him. It'll all be blown away like the steamer smoke yonder, and he'll wonder at himself for ever thinking he could have put up with the idea of any wife but you. For that's a man's way, my dear, since the world began."

"Was it your way, daddy?'" asked Posey archly.

"My child, I was ready to put myself before the mouth of the first cannon I met up with when I went into service, and be blown to atoms, through calf-love for a young lady of our neighborhood. She jilted me to marry a widower, a Baptist preacher by the name of Simkins; no, it was Lawson, I think—but never mind. She had nine children when I

saw her next, and we didn't recognize each other. When we did, she talked to me about Simpkins'es (it really was Simkins) asthma, without a break for fifteen solid minutes, and I got away, thanking the Lord it wasn't my asthma, and my fat wife, and my nine children, howling and doing stunts all over the house—yet I lived to be happier than any king with the real angel of my life! But, dearie, it isn't the time to be talking of anything but you and John Glynn, and the joy you've given me in promising to marry each other some day. He is the finest young man I know, and the one of all in the world I'd choose to share what—there, you do the talking, I can't trust myself."

"Daddy, do you want me to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the way I always have? Then here it is. What I've promised to do, I'll do. I think just as much of John as you do, in a way, and I was proud to have him ask me. But I felt he was doing it because he had made up his mind it was the thing of all others to please you; also, because it was safe and right to anchor his life to a girl who belonged to his own class, and had no ideas beyond the plain, homely

things she had been brought up to. But he doesn't know me, in the least. I'm not the girl he thinks, only a vain, conceited creature who loves admiration and flattery and pretty things, and all the luxuries I see other people having on this voyage, and the high-up places of the world. I want to live, to have my fling, and what's worse, I want to be loved—*really*, as I think it ought to be!"

Her voice dropped with her eyelashes; a burning blush ran up and overspread her face. Old Herbert Winstanley asked himself if this were, indeed, his little girl, his romp in pinafores of a year or two back? Whence had come the blooming vision of young womanhood who had supplanted the Posey of his recent lean and struggling years? What were these obsessions controlling her? He could not tell, and meekly bent before the blast.

"I reckon you know best, daughter," he said, clearing his throat in some embarrassment. "But this much I'm as sure of as that the sun is in the sky. You've done a wise thing, and a good thing, in engaging yourself to John. Be true to him and to yourself, and the rest'll all come right. Only,

it's fair to tell you that you and John aren't a-going to begin as poor as poverty's back door, the way we did. I've had a little streak o' luck lately, and there's cash enough to give you your fling in Europe, and start you and John to housekeeping in New York in pretty decent style. He's a luckier fellow than he knows, is John, only I don't mean to tell him so yet a while, or anybody else, and neither must you, my girl."

"Could I have a cabin de luxe, and a French maid and a chaperon to travel with, daddy," she asked with a glowing countenance, "instead of half a stateroom with a horrid woman who drenches herself with scents, and lectures me about keeping the light turned on while I do my hair? Could I have a little string of real pearls, and one lovely pearl ring, and a rug for my steamer-chair lined with otter, and tailor-made suits that fit adorably—like Miss Carstairs, who's just my ideal, though she'll hardly look at me?"

"We'll see, we'll see," mumbled Mr. Winstanley, looking as much alarmed as did the fisherman in the "Arabian Nights," when he had let the Genie escape and soar from the

Magic Bottle. "Seems to me you spent a good lot shopping in New York the week we were there."

"I wish I could throw all that trash I bought overboard," said the girl, gritting her teeth in vexation. "Nobody but an idiot from Alison's Cross Roads would have chosen such things and thought them stylish."

"It may be so," said her father, resignedly, "but putting one fact alongside another, it looks as if you'd had as good a show as any young lady on board, daughter."

"Daddy, you are the dearest old bat!" cried she, revealing to his astonished gaze her eyes full of big, bright, childish tears. "How can't you see that I'm only a peep-show, an amusement for all these people, and that most of the women on board hardly speak to me? I don't care a bit about that horrid old war-horse of the Scripture that snorts and champs—Miss Bleecker! I consider her beneath my notice, and she may insult me all she pleases. And Mrs. Vereker is another, and all their set—dull, stiff women, with nothing but their wealth to recommend them."

"Well, if it comes to that," murmured

Mr. Winstanley, involuntarily clinking the sovereigns he carried in a buckskin pouch in his breeches pocket, then checking himself and saying no more.

"They may say I'm a chorus girl all they're a mind to. I know I'm not, and that you are one of the most honored citizens of our town, and we came of good old stock. I don't deny I've wanted to go on the stage. Till lately, I've simply yearned for it. But that, and all sorts of notions I had seem to have vanished away since I came aboard—since I've known Miss Carstairs."

"That's the young woman sits at our table? Can't say I blame you, Posey, I kinder took a shine to her, myself, the first evening out; but she chilled on me afterward, and I'm never for troubling folks with my attentions."

"She chilled on you because of me, poor dear; for any nice girl in her senses must see you're a heavenly angel, if you do wear rusty tweeds. She thought I was crude and aggressive and cheap, and so I am, maybe, but I don't mean to stay so; and if ever I get to be anything better, it'll be Helen Carstairs that's started me. But she won't know it,

and won't know me, and that's really what's bothering me so dreadfully, daddy."

"Her father's the great Carstairs, isn't he? Didn't I hear John say he'd indirectly given him a lift last year, and said some good things about the way the boy managed a certain office job that came under Carstairs' eye?"

"Did he? There now, daddy, is just the girl John would have been wise to get, if he could. She might have helped him up the ladder by just putting out a finger-tip. And he is so ambitious, so fastidious. I could see that little trifles about me jarred on him constantly—the very things these lords and grandees aboard admire the most it seems. He called them provincialisms, and Lord Channel Fleet says they're simply delicious. Who am I to believe?"

"Ah, my little girl, I can't tell you, and that's the truth. But John's apt to be right, only whether or not Miss Carstairs is his ideal, you just be yourself, and don't put on any frills. You can't help being lively, thank God, nor true, nor generous, for you're your own mother's child. You'll make friends, never fear, the only trouble to my mind is

lest they should be those who care for you only because——"

"Why, daddy, one would almost think I am something in disguise. You needn't be afraid of any one on this trip, however. They'll all forget me the day the ship touches Liverpool."

"Well, it don't matter much when we've got John behind us, does it, daughter? I reckon he'll be proud as I am to hear what a belle you've been. There's only one thing it's crossed my mind he mightn't fancy overmuch—your going around with that lord fellow that's been so much talked about—that Clandonald man, I mean."

"Oh! daddy, *don't!*"

Mr. Winstanley had thought himself, through experience, prepared for most of the idiosyncrasies of femininity as developed by his daughter, but he could not have reasonably counted upon the look that came into her face as she made this protest. It caused him to stare, shake himself like a wet dog, scrutinize her again narrowly, then utter an exclamation familiar to him only under stress of strong emotion.

"Stonewall Jackson, daughter! I want to know!"

CHAPTER IV

THE measure of Mr. Winstanley's curiosity was, however, not to be satisfied on this occasion; since, almost immediately, the colloquy with his daughter over the "Baltic's" rail was destined to interruption by Lord Clandonald in person, who came up to ask if Miss Winstanley were ready for their walk.

Since the first evening of their meeting, he had fallen into the habit of seeking her out in a half-shy, wholly unemotional manner, and of spending a half hour or so in her company listening to her merry chatter and insensibly lightening and brightening out of the heavy lassitude that had possessed his soul for so many weary months. With returning animation, the real beauty and high distinction of his face revealed itself. Posey, who had thought of his title merely as a pleasing toy, who had as yet acquired none of the prevalent worship of her average countrymen for the glamour of a place among the hereditary nobility of the lands they affect

to surpass in achievement, liked to be with him because of three things—viz., the great strength and beauty of his body, his gift of beautiful diction, and the melodious speech that rang upon her ear like a chime of perfect bells. She also enjoyed his way of brushing his hair and putting on his clothes, and not caring in the least what anybody on board thought of him or said of him. At least, that is what, had she possessed a confidante of her own sex, Miss Winstanley would have admitted concerning her indifferent admirer.

He had come to her as a man who at thirty considers himself to have done with life, and consents to take up incidental diversion by the way. He had never met a girl so ignorant of the world, so inexhaustibly interested in things and people, so fresh and healthy, yet innately refined, so daring, yet so sure of herself that no man might take a liberty with her in speech or action; and above all, so pretty.

So deliciously pretty! The woman whom he had ruined his life by marrying, five years before, had been accounted a beauty, and was a gentlewoman by tradition and association. As he had seen Ruby Darien last, in the di-

vorce court, she seemed a mere made-up creature who would go to pieces at night in her maid's hands, a thing of artifice and stimulant, of base passions and shallow emotionality, already a has-been, although barely his own age. At what time of her existence was it that she had made his pulses thrill with her loveliness? Could he have ever considered Ruby the peer in looks of this stray maiden come upon by chance to be soon parted with, and never seen again? He hated to think he had believed himself Ruby's lover during the time before he had found her out. He loathed the days before he put her away, when, for his boy's sake, he had kept on terms with her outwardly. After his child died, and he had taken his opportunity to be a free man, he often thanked God, that following that voyage of his wife's to South Africa he had never thought of her as beautiful.

But except for the somewhat languid admiration excited in him, the young American had not yet stirred the deeper fountains of Clandonald's feeling. Mariol, observing the progress of affairs, was quietly content. He really considered the acquaintance with Posey

a species of mild cure, like a visit to a German health-place where one eats brown bread and baked apples, and goes to bed at ten o'clock. If it had been Miss Carstairs, now, upon whom these desultory attentions of his lordship had been bestowed, Mariol, having ascertained this lady to be the daughter of the world-famous financier, would have been much more actively concerned in forecasting for her a place among the white peacocks at Beaumanoir.

It was about Beaumanoir that Clandonald now found himself obliged to talk with Miss Winstanley. With the lightning-like rapidity of growth in steamer intimacies, they had all come to discourse of one another's domiciles and surroundings, and Mariol, whose æstheticism rejoiced in his friend's noble old forsaken home, had shown the girl a photograph of it. Posey, like every Southerner, had an instinctive love and reverence for the historic element in English country homes, and the ancient moated dwelling in whose grounds monarchs had taken their pleasure appealed keenly to her otherwise concrete and contemporaneous view of things. To see it was like stepping out of a modern railway

station into an old-world garden of ripe delights. And to be actually walking up and down decks with the owner, albeit he looked like other men and had his hands thrust in the pockets of an indifferently shabby ulster, was a fillip her imagination had not previously known.

A little teased, a little flattered by her queries on the subject, Clandonald yet felt assured that her interest was impersonal and genuine. When he remembered how Ruby had hated to stay at Beaumanoir, preferring any small stuffy hotel in Paris or Rome, or on the Riviera, Miss Winstanley's real enthusiasm was refreshing. It almost made him want to go back himself to that spot, haunted by the ghosts of dead beliefs, near which the poor little boy slept, under a tiny mound in the churchyard that he was always trying to forget.

Strange, now it always came to him when alone in a balmy wood, with birds singing and sun filtering through the branches; or on Sundays when a church bell rang; or if he awoke suddenly in the middle of the night; or in looking at a field of haymakers and distant grazing sheep! It was not a keen pain

any longer, but only a sobering, tender thought, and the man was better for it afterward. Now, again, as he thrust his hands deeper in his pockets and strode up and down beside the girl, dodging other walking pairs, and wishing there were not so many people in the world who wanted to do what he did, the image of the little green mound arose across the waste of wide Atlantic. Was it Posey who inspired his one sacred remembrance? He could not tell, but went on letting her draw him out about his lovely impoverished Beaumanoir, until she was touched and astonished at the feeling he revealed concerning it.

"Oh! I am sure you will have it all once more, and be able to enjoy everything as of old," she exclaimed impulsively.

"Perhaps you don't know why this is impossible," he answered, gulping down the bitter fact. "It is quite hopeless for me to live decently there, on all I am ever likely to have in the way of income."

"And I, like a goose, keep always ignoring the money question in connection with those beautiful entrancing old English places. I've read about them so often in a book we have of 'Dwellings of the Aristocracy and

Gentry,' and also in 'Country Life.' They seem to have been created to go on for ages by themselves, in a state of suspended animation, like the Sleeping Beauty's palace. If you won't think me silly, I'll tell you that when I get hold of a copy of 'Country Life,' I imagine myself living in one house after another of the illustrations, and I want to buy all the horses and dogs and sheep and everything in the advertisements, except, maybe, incubators, which are horrid unnatural things, and the smelly stuff they put upon the grass and flowers that can't say 'don't'!"

Clandonald laughed.

"Rather my own idea. But I supposed all you people of the South owned large estates and many acres to experiment upon."

"Oh! dear, no! We personally never owned anything bigger than a back-yard, until my father was persuaded by a man to go shares with him in some land I never saw, where they found both coal and iron. Last year the man died, and my daddy, who had paid up most all the purchase money, came into possession of the whole property. I believe it's turned out better than he thought,

and he's lately got something good out of it, else certainly we'd not have had this trip to Europe. I'm glad you never saw Alison's Cross Roads, Lord Clandonald. It's just the homeliest, pokiest little place in Alabama, and the people are good and kind, but commonplace to a degree. The houses are all of wood with jig-saw trimmings and the paint half worn off. Nobody thinks it necessary to improve anything, and the negroes swarm over everywhere, and rule the land."

"Then I suppose you'll call me jolly impertinent," said he, "if I wonder how you grew up as you are in the middle of it."

"I don't know! I just did. People have grown tired, down there, of holding up their hands over me. My teacher at school, who was born North, was the only one that ever understood why I wanted anything different from the rest. She took several magazines, and told me about others, that I persuaded daddy to subscribe to. She lent me books and talked to me, but two years ago she decided to marry in New York, and I lost her. She lives there now, dear soul, in an awfully little flat. Her husband is in the insurance business, and she edits a column of 'Advice

to Girls.' She says she fairly hates some of the idiots who write to her asking the most drivelling questions. But to please the editor, she has to dissemble, and call them dears and answer like a guardian angel when she had rather choke them and be done with it —because the work pays the butcher's bill and half the gas!"

"Has she taught you that such poverty is evened by the good to be acquired from the married state?"

"I think so. At least, she and Mr. Bartley have a good deal of fun out of things. Their greatest treat, when their maid's cooking gets too impossible and Mr. Bartley is growing thin, is to go to dinner at an Italian restaurant, a dollar each, with wine, and to eat enough spaghetti to last another little while. Mrs. Bartley got fifteen dollars for looking up facts and dates in the Astor Library for a fashionable lady, who was allotted to read a paper on something she never heard of before, at a meeting of her literary club. Mrs. Bartley ended by doing the whole thing, and the lady was so fascinated by herself in typewriting, that she sent a check for fifteen instead of ten; so the Bartleys took

me to their restaurant for dinner, and afterward to the play, in cheap seats. Yes, I think the Bartleys are all right. If their kitchen door could be kept shut, and the smell of cooking be banished from the parlor, I believe they'd be as happy as most people who are married, anyway."

"Perhaps, if you and your father are to be in London, you would let me take you out to dinner and cheap seats at the play?"

"Wouldn't I love it? But you can't drag daddy to the theatre, and I'm not like Miss Carstairs, blessed with a chaperon. Do you notice that, as we are getting 'half-seas over,' Miss Bleecker's English accent becomes more pronounced? She is forever talking about when we are 'in town,' and regretting that it is out of the season, because so few of their great friends will be there to welcome them. She calls all the American duchesses by their first names, and the other United States peeresses that she didn't play with in infancy, she must have brought up by hand."

"I am afraid I am too lowly a personage to claim the lady's acquaintance in future," said Clandonald, indifferently. "But I confess I should like, for my friend Mariol's

sake, who has conceived a vast admiration for her charge—to manage to ask Miss Carstairs and himself to join you and your father in a run down to Beaumanoir for luncheon, while you are 'in town.' It is pretty, there, in autumn, and there are sure to be some good peaches on the garden wall."

"How adorable!" exclaimed Posey. "Daddy might go to that, if I beg him, but Miss Carstairs—! There's the difficulty. She won't more than look at me. I wonder why you, who are born really higher up in the world than Miss Bleecker and Miss Carstairs, never let me feel that I am only a druggist's daughter!"

"In Athens, they tell you Aristotle kept a chemist's shop," answered Clandonald, laughing. "And I have always understood that some of the most illustrious of the families in New York's Four Hundred were founded upon drugs."

"If it wasn't pills, or capsules, or hair tonic, it was some other kind of merchandise!" said Posey, viciously. "And, anyhow, what does it matter? There was a sentence I copied out of a book of Maarten Maartens, that Mrs. Bartley lent me, about

there being no other way of living than either on the money you have earned for yourself, or on the money that other people have earned for you. As long as that simple fact remains, the question will also remain whether money-making is so very contemptible!"

"Try any man living, with an honest chance, and see what he'd answer," said Clandonald with a sigh. "I'd give anything I own for a respectable business that would bring in the cash and the knowledge of how to run it, *bien entendu.*"

"You poor thing!" exclaimed Miss Winstanley, guilelessly. "Why weren't you born in dear America? Of course if you *could* go stalking around in chain-armor like those ancestors of yours at Beaumanoir, it wouldn't seem so appropriate. But just to look at you as you stand, to-day, I should judge there were the makings of a fair business man in you. Look here, Lord Clandonald, I don't know that I was ever better pleased in my life than by that idea of yours of our going to lunch at Beaumanoir with Miss Carstairs. I don't mind telling you I just adore that girl —and the combination of her company with a moat and yew trees, and wall-peaches, and

the chance of seeing English rooks—and Miss Bleecker not 'in it,' I'll be eternally obliged."

"It seems to me the host counts for unflatteringly little," said Clandonald, somewhat piqued.

"I didn't mean to have you think so," answered she with astonishing gentleness, "I was only carried away to forget my manners by realizing so many dreams at once. Indeed, I am glad, or shall be, to meet you again after this voyage. Now, I'm going to ask you something that will make you laugh, perhaps, but please don't. Could you give me the address of a really good place in London where I could get frocks and hats, ready-to-wear, that would keep me from looking like a guy?"

Poor Clandonald winced at thought of just how he had become acquainted with the best *faiseuses* in London, whose bills he had paid to the uttermost farthing, after the ex-Lady Clandonald had ceased to be. But he could not help smiling at the earnest anxiety of his questioner.

"I think I might help you a little, perhaps, but surely——"

"Surely there ought to be some woman aboard to do it? Of course you think so,

but if I could tell you half I've divined, and some things I've overheard from them, you'd know I'd never ask one of them. Why, I heard that old Vereker tabby say to the old Bleecker cat, as distinctly as could be, that I was a freak in clothes and a bounder in manners, and she wondered the captain let me go at large."

"Oh! I say."

"Perfectly true, and I had it out of her by trailing her half-dead husband after me all over the ship, until he hadn't a leg to stand on; and I put a rose in his buttonhole under her very eyes. I've been ashamed of it ever since, but when a girl's got to fight her own battles, what would you have?"

"There should be always some one glad to fight for you," he said, suddenly fired by her proud young beauty in distress.

They had, while speaking, walked down to the dividing rail that cuts off the promenaders of the second cabin from the first-class decks, and for some moments tarried there, Clandonald with his back to it, Miss Winstanley facing him. As the Englishman spoke these unpremeditated words of warm sympathy, for the second time that

day there had come into the girl's artless face an expression she certainly had no idea of revealing. It caused Clandonald to pull himself up with a jerk, and stay the vague, rather affectionate, words he had been on the point of uttering, without, perhaps, meaning to have too much importance attached to them. And it was further reflected in the shining green eyes of a second-class passenger in shabby black, standing near by the barrier, wearing a veil of black gauze with large coquettish velvet dots that half concealed her undulated locks of unreasonably ruddy hair!

It was not the first time the green gleam of those watchful eyes had been fixed upon Clandonald and his companions. He had, in fact, been under their close observation whenever practicable since leaving New York harbor, in the course of their owner's predatory walks, as she alternately drew near and receded with graceful feline tread, seeming to look at nothing, yet forever alert where the good-looking, lazy young Englishman was concerned.

The youthful steward who distends himself for the public good by blowing the bugle for lunch was, on this occasion, the agent of

Providence to relieve a strained situation. Clandonald could not, in the face of such a blast, go on with his implied offer of championship. The second-cabin passenger glided swiftly back across her little bridge, and was seen no more. Miss Winstanley, announcing herself half-starved, went to her stateroom to wash her hands. And his lordship, to calm his feelings, partook of a certain small, specially reviving, bitter-sweet draught, which his servant had acquired the gentle art of mixing, during their sojourn in San Francisco. On the way into the dining-room, he found Mariol just ahead of him, amid a congerie of stewards hurrying to and from their pantries with their arms full of crockery, and in an atmosphere tinctured with out-rushing odors of cauliflower and curried rice, gave his friend a word of counsel.

"I have been talking with Miss Winstanley," he said. "The truth is, Mariol, the poor girl is being pecked by all these women, until it hurts. You have some friendship, perhaps some influence, with Miss Carstairs. Persuade her to be generous, and take the outsider in. It will cost her nothing, and I'm

hanged if I understand why she's been such an icicle, as it is."

"Did Miss Winstanley invite your intercession?" asked Mariol, dodging back from contact with an inclined plane of mutton broth, in a tilting china plate marked with the White Star's emblem, borne aloft by a deeply apologetic steward.

"No. Absolutely no. She'd fight to the last ditch before she'd give in to them. But I have an ulterior motive. I want to ask the two young women with my dear old aunt, Lady Campstown, to play propriety, to come down with you to Beaumanoir some day next week, and if they hardly speak——"

"Under these circumstances, I will engage to attempt the impossible, though whether I achieve it is quite another story. I, too, have been at a loss to fathom Miss Carstairs' apparent intention to ignore our pretty tablemate. I had fancied her too sure of her own position to care about a mere difference in social status. I have found her perfectly amiable. But if, by any chance, the discussion of Miss Winstanley comes up, there is an immediate stiffening of the muscles of the neck and chin, the clear eyes become veiled,

and she turns the subject. I could almost fancy, but that they never met before, there was some personal animus between them."

"Tell her the girl is her devoted lover from afar, makes her a model in all things, and that we owe the agreeable modifications of the fair Posey's dress and manner exclusively to Miss Carstairs' example."

"That is a happy suggestion, and may accomplish good results. But did you ever know a man's eulogy of a woman effect anything with her own sex? It is generally successful only in confirming the worst predispositions, and in precipitating animosity where latent antipathy had sufficed. Still, who could resist the exquisite flattery of such imitation as our Posey's of Miss Carstairs? Fix your day for Beaumanoir, my dear chap. I consider our cause gained in advance."

"Do you know, Mariol," said Clandonald as the two men sat down at table, where the ladies had not yet arrived, "I have sometimes fancied that you yourself are getting rather under the spell of the young lady you have engaged to placate in Miss Winstanley's behalf."

"Do you know, Clan, that I never before

suspected you of the imaginative gift? Nothing but Jonah's gourd—was it Jonah, and was it a gourd?—that grew up and withered in a night, could have had so little time allotted to its natural development, as a fancy by me for Miss Carstairs."

"That is no argument. I have read of love affairs beginning at the Statue of Liberty and culminating before the Gulf Stream was crossed. There is really no better medium than mid-Atlantic air for the growth of the tender passion. The leisure of a good voyage is like the forty years of Europe compared with the cycle of Cathay."

"It seems to me that you are exculpatory."

"I wish to heaven I might be!" exclaimed Clandonald, smothering his very genuine regret with a forkful of the roast beef of old England pastured upon Western plains.

The talk that morning with Posey Winstanley had awakened in him certain emotions of a simple elementary sort that, in spite of him, still twanged upon his heart-strings, pleasingly. He had, however, been by no means prepared for that upward glance of her childlike orbs when he had offered her his sympathy. While the normal vanity of

the male creature thrilled in quickened interest in response to it, his judgment, his sense of responsibility, nay, of honor, called upon him loudly to let the thing go no further. A patent and audacious coquette on the surface, she was at heart a child who had as yet tasted no reality of sentiment for one of the dominant sex, and to whom such reality would inevitably come with extraordinary force.

The whimsicality of her having selected him—a battered plaything of the Fates, who did not want her, who could not indulge in her—for the object of a dawning first passion, struck him hard. He resolved to keep out of her way, and considered how he could have his meals elsewhere, or take to his bed for the remainder of the voyage. The projected luncheon at Beaumanoir should be carried out, and that done, he would have acquitted himself, *en galant homme*, of all that could be reasonably expected of a travelling Briton toward visiting Americans who had contributed to cheer his voyage across the Atlantic.

To begin the new order of things, he let himself be absorbed in conversation by Miss

Bleecker, his pet aversion, who leaning over the table, her ample bosom begarlanded with chains and cords, each one sustaining some necessary implement for the aid of vision, far or near, and all of them entangled, was in her best spirits. She, Lady Channel Fleet, and Mrs. Vereker, had been in their deck chairs since broth and biscuits to the present moment, discussing the American women who had married into the British nobility. The three ancient heads cowled in veils and furry hoods—for the air off the Banks had had in it a tang of ice—had bobbed together during this time with a vivacity of movement suggesting the cinematograph.

Mrs. Vereker's sciatic leg, which it was the mission of her good-looking footman to keep enwrapped with rugs, when he could forego flirting with the ladies' maids, had been frequently exposed to the biting wind, and yet she did not notice it. Lady Channel Fleet, who, with her husband and a maid, had been doing America economically in somebody's private car, at somebody's expense, wisely kept quiet; since, if she shivered, there was no James to wrap her up. Miss Bleecker, more serene, indeed, than Buddha, in her po-

sition between a British matron of title and one of New York's leaders, did not feel the cold. Except in a parterre box at the opera (with the best people), she had no greater idea of happiness than such surroundings; with a long, uninterrupted morning in which to rehash old stories and acquire new ones concerning the ladies under discussion, whom she secretly considered the elect of earth.

Lady Channel Fleet, conscious of having had more honors paid to her in America than in the whole course of her undistinguished life at home, was proportionately inclined to be critical of Americans, now she had come away. Her strictures upon their extravagance in living, which she had enjoyed to the top of her bent, the largeness of their houses and the smallness of their grounds, their ridiculous way of running after strangers, and the extraordinary interchange of matrimonial partners among people one knew and visited, were interspersed with various bits of gossip she had been able to pick up in England concerning American peeresses who had not received her at their houses and were, indeed, unconscious of her existence.

It had been rather a bitter pill for Mrs.

Vereker, who was hand-in-glove with all these fine people both in England and New York, to have to listen politely to Lady Channel Fleet. But, then, Mrs. Vereker had already stood so much in the line of incivility from the British dames of high place upon whom she had lavished courtesy during their sojourn in the land of the free, that she was a little hardened. She knew that on arrival out, she would go from Claridge's to stop at country houses where Lady Channel Fleet's star would never even faintly rise. She was secure in being able to buy herself a good time and the best of everything wherever she might go, and felt, on the whole, content. Miss Bleecker, on the contrary, who had no such solid foundations as her friend, felt in listening to Lady Channel Fleet as acutely pained as if she were reading one of Mr. Benson's or Mr. Hichens' novels, wherein modern Americans of good society are made to say "Popper" and "real nice." She could hardly imagine how her nation could arise to ignoring these dreadful accusations.

But when Lady Channel Fleet had incidentally let fall that she always presumed Miss Bleecker, from her speech and manner,

to be an Englishwoman born, Miss Bleecker had forgiven all. She redoubled her powers of entertainingness, brought out a few newer, racier anecdotes of persons known to all of them, and the luncheon bugle had caught the gossips unawares, making them feel the morning quite too short.

"I suppose we shall see you at Mr. Vereker's little supper this evening, Lord Clandonald?" said the chaperon, suavely. "One knows what to expect in the way of private dainties, when Mr. Vereker entertains—game, wines, patés, caviare put up for him on the Volga, flowers, grapes and melons from his own glass houses, and such turtle soup as only the Vereker *chef* can send aboard. And to think the poor man has to sit at the head of the table, drinking milk and swallowing little tablets out of his waistcoat pocket, looking gray as a ghost, and thin as a rail, not able to touch a thing of all his delicious spread!"

"Mr. Vereker has been so good as to include me," answered Clandonald.

"I believe most of those at our table are expected," the lady went on, in a hardly lowered voice, "with, of course, one or two exceptions. When Mr. Vereker crosses alone they say his parties are apt to be a little

mixed. But with his wife aboard—she is so thoroughly exclusive, one need never fear."

What might have been omitted from the words, was accentuated by a manner of contempt whose objects there was no mistaking. Mr. Winstanley as usual appeared not to be listening to the passing chat; but his daughter lost not a syllable or look; Helen Carstairs, also, fully appreciated the situation. While Posey, with rare self-control, kept her own counsel and remained silent, Miss Carstairs, flushing faintly, spoke so that all present could hear her.

"I'm afraid I'm one of those who fail to appreciate the honor of Mr. Vereker's invitations, ashore or afloat. Who was it who said to be left out by him was a greater compliment than to be placed at his right hand?"

"Helen, I'm surprised to hear you talk such nonsense," began her chaperon briskly, but was interrupted by Posey Winstanley, who with a grateful glance at Helen, spoke in tones as quiet and measured as her own.

"Then I am certainly past getting the benefit of Miss Carstairs' hint, Miss Bleecker, since Mr. Vereker asked me first, before seeing if he could get the others; and I was rash enough to accept."

CHAPTER V

Mr. Vereker's little supper proved all that Miss Bleecker had claimed for it in the matter of exotic luxury. American beauty roses, as fresh as if they had bloomed that morning, decked the centre of the board, and a corsage bouquet of royal purple violets lay beside each lady's plate. The unpleasantly pallid host, with skin drawn like parchment over his lean jaws, his hair and mustache unnaturally black, sat at one end, and (to the dismay of Miss Bleecker, who had been made to fit in at the side) Miss Posey Winstanley upon his left, opposite my Lady Channel Fleet in a rumpled cotton blouse, still wearing the turquoise earrings, with the addition of a turquoise chain to hold her eyeglasses.

Posey, in severely plain white voile, with a picture hat and white feathers framing the waves of her splendid hair, thanked her stars that she had had Helen Carstairs' example in dress long enough to profit by it for this occasion. She saw in half a glance that her

frock, the result of the best skill of the dressmaker at Alison's Cross Roads, who called her by name in fitting her, could not vie with the dove-colored confection with its all-over embroideries that sat so easily upon Helen's erect form. But she knew that it was unobtrusive, and the little slip of mirror above her washing-stand had told she was at her best.

It had been an ordeal that of dressing while her cross room-mate, who made a virtue of what she called "retiring" early, continued at intervals to extend her head like a turtle's from its shell, and inquire whether Miss Winstanley would be very much longer! Posey was fain to go outside and have the finishing touches put to her toilette by the stewardess, Mrs. Gasher, the bib of whose white apron covered sympathetic interest, since she knew about the supper, and that the ladies to be present were dead set against the beauty of the ship. When she had stuck the last pin, Mrs. Gasher maternally informed Miss Winstanley that she looked pretty enough to beat the Jews, and would find her 'ot water covered with a towel when she came in again to go to bed; and if she

couldn't get undone herself, never to mind ringing up Mrs. Gasher.

Under this cheerful inspiration, Posey had marched into the saloon to find the others all in place, an empty chair kept for her at the host's left.

She had been hoping to be next Clandonald—for no reason but that she wanted it. Instead, she had but a cold glance from him across the table, at which she quailed because she thought she read in it displeasure. And immediately he turned back to his conversation with Prince Zourikoff about Silver or Trusts, or Labor, or some of those tiresome things, and looked at her no more. The only consolation for this awful blow was that Helen, sitting between Mariol and Bobby Vane, had smiled at her kindly when she came in late.

Miss Bleecker, beside the Graf von Bau, who occupied the seat to the left of Mrs. Vereker, decided that the world was out of joint. Lord Channel Fleet, at the right of his hostess, looked tired, and when Miss Bleecker effusively addressed him upon topics of contemporaneous interest in London, gave her but scant answers. Graf von Bau, after

he had exhausted civilities with the lady of the feast, had but eyes and ears for the spot where Posey had already begun to outdo herself in characteristic nonsense.

"That girl!" said Miss Bleecker, between her teeth, to Mr. Charley Brownlow, a serious-faced, clean-shaven New York clubman of whom the utmost his friends and enemies could find to say was that he was "always everywhere." "It is not enough to defy poor dear Mrs. Vereker, who flatly said she should not be asked, but to make herself so conspicuous. See, every man at table, except you——"

"I don't know her, don't you know? Never met her anywhere," interposed Mr. Brownlow gravely.

"Of course you didn't—as I was saying, every man at table but you, and, I'm glad to see, Lord Clandonald, can look at nothing else. I suppose she went too far with Clandonald, and he wants to put her back in her place. Everybody understands old Vereker's rage for a pretty face, though I, for one, can never see good looks in a common person. It's scandalous the way she's going on tonight. Mr. Vereker's trying to make her

take champagne, and she pretending she never drinks it! Poor Lady Channel Fleet, what a trial to sit opposite her! Now, we shall have a fresh batch of stories circulated in London about the way American girls act; and the worst of it is you can never get the English to see the difference between people of our stamp, and hers. Why, I don't believe Lord Channel Fleet and Clandonald take in, at this minute, the enormous distance between my Helen and that impossible young person. What's that they're laughing at? Something saucy she is saying to Lady Channel Fleet, I'll wager."

"What do we do for chaperons, at home, Lady Channel Fleet?" Miss Winstanley was remarking, her head well in the air, and the spirit of mischief securely seated in her eyes. "Well, we don't need 'em greatly at Alison's Cross Roads, where I live; but if there's a party at the other end of town, your best young man generally calls for you in a hack. And when he brings you home again, about three or four in the morning, you give him your latch-key to open the front door, and if you're not tall enough, you get him to turn out the gas in the vestibule before he goes."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated Lady Channel Fleet, growing purple.

"Why not, I'd like to know?" exclaimed Posey, sturdily. "We consider it awfully swell to be taken that way, and the fellows that can't afford a hack generally bunch together with the girls and all go in the tram; and it's lots of fun, I tell you. Just bully!"

Mrs. Vereker exchanged glances of mute despair with Miss Bleecker and Mr. Brownlow. The others laughed frankly, Clandonald, only, remaining smileless, and Helen Carstairs coloring with a futile desire to arrest Miss Winstanley's progress in confidences.

As well attempt to stay Niagara! A demon of recklessness had possessed himself of John Glynn's promised bride, and poor Posey went from bad to worse, talking continuously, her cheeks flushed to the color of the American beauties lavished upon the table, her eyes glittering defiance; while old Vereker, who had desired nothing better, applauded her every utterance, and urged her to further daring.

"She should stop now," whispered Mariol

to Miss Carstairs, who was looking very grave.

"Oh, indeed I think so," answered Helen earnestly.

"For her own sake, if there is no one else whose interests are to be guarded."

Helen started perceptibly. No one else whose interests were to be guarded? What of John Glynn, and where was the friendship Helen had promised to keep for him in lieu of the love she had withdrawn? Impulsively, she leaned forward, caught Posey Winstanley's eye, and into her own beseeching, all-womanly gaze threw an appeal not to be resisted.

Clandonald, who had begun to be sickeningly annoyed by the scene, and as far as possible avoided looking directly at the heroine of the hour, happened to note this little episode. Remembering what Posey had told him of Helen's influence over her imagination, he was touched but not surprised at the younger girl's response. Posey, blushing hotly, drooped her eyes, and in an instant, as if with a garment cast aside, had parted with her aggressive gaiety. During the remainder of the meal she sat dull and spirit-

less, and at its close, when she had promised to sing one song for them, tried to get out of it and leave the party.

There was a general outcry of remonstrance. Bobby Vane, coming around to lead her to the piano, whispered to her to do her best and silence the tabby chorus. When she finally yielded, and sat down, expectation ran high among Mr. Vereker's faction that the girl would give them something audacious to be remembered.

It was but a "Mammy" chant, she breathed, rather than sang, in a *voix d'or* that softened all hearts within hearing; and before they could applaud it she struck firmer chords, and began Lockhart's Spanish ballad:

> "Rise up, rise up, Xarifa,
> And lay your golden cushion down."

The song and its setting were unfamiliar to most of those present. While it lasted, they forgot the grinding of mighty screws that bore the ship ever forward, they heard not the wash of ocean coming through the open ports. They were in ancient days of warlike Spain, and all their sympathy was

for the lovely Moorish lady forsaken by false Abdallah. Everybody within hearing was drawn irresistibly to listen in ravished silence. And when for the last time the hapless Xarifa refused to come to the window and "gaze with all the town" at her recreant lover riding by in state, the honors of the evening were clearly for Posey Winstanley. At that moment, all but a few of the audience were prepared to be led or used by her, as one feels when Calvé softens to sing a folk-song of her native land.

Amid the patter of applause Miss Winstanley abruptly arose from the piano, and said she was going out to get a breath of air. There were protestations, but only the host, who looked at her with bleared, enraptured eyes, ventured to ask her to sing again. Then, Mr. Vereker finding his proposition for Lillian Russell's latest success unheeded, allowed the departure of his star, rejecting all offers of companionship, to be the signal for breaking up the affair.

Everybody scattered, the men to the smoking-room, the ladies to their cabins. Helen Carstairs, with her maid in attendance, came back almost immediately, and stood for a moment hesitating in the companion-way of the

deck where she had last seen Posey. Here she encountered Clandonald, who, like herself, seemed to be at a loss.

"I am undertaking a formidable task," she said. "To look for a missing person in this ship; but have you chanced to see Miss Winstanley anywhere?"

She saw that his face was clouded, his calm ruffled.

"I myself have been on the same search," he said, brusquely. "But we may as well spare our pains. The young lady in question appears to be at present under charge of Mr. Vereker."

Helen had but time to let her face show the annoyance of her feelings, when out of the clear obscure of the deck beyond, against a background of sky "patined with such bright stars" as never Shakespeare saw, came to them a flying figure. It was Posey, flushed with angry blood, and after her limped their host of the evening, his spectral face wreathed in apologetic smiles.

"Oh! please, Miss Carstairs, may I stay with you?" exclaimed the girl with quivering lips, in her agitation putting herself between Helen and Clandonald, who involun-

tarily interposed his stalwart form so that none else could approach her. "I didn't realize how late it was when I went out to be by myself in the fresh air."

"Miss Winstanley is just a *leetle* nervous after her triumphs of to-night," began Mr. Vereker, who had come up with them—smoothly, but ill at ease.

"I am not nervous. I never was in my life," cried the girl, stamping her foot. "It is because—because——"

She ended in a burst of passionate tears.

"Let me go with you to your room," said Helen, gently. "I had wanted to ask you for a little walk, but it is late now, and the deck people are for putting us all to bed."

"High-strung little filly, and green; green as grass," observed Mr. Vereker to Clandonald, as Miss Carstairs disappeared, leading Posey down the corridor. "If you're up to a little poker in the smoking-room, I can tell you a thing or two about our bewitching girl from Dixieland that will amuse you greatly."

"You will excuse me," answered Clandonald, with lightning in his gaze. Mariol, passing in at the moment, saw Vereker shrivel

under it and disappear. Clandonald gave his friend a clue to the situation.

"If you had followed your impulse and punched the old sinner's head," commented Mariol, "it might have been a poor return for his hospitality, but a mighty relief to you. However, we can safely leave him to the gods for punishment. He will probably go under to-morrow, with one of his attacks, because he drank champagne for supper. I understand that a trained nurse for him makes part of the Verekers' travelling suite. He will become a horrid elderly infant in her hands. I am glad Miss Carstairs came to the relief. I hope you noticed that fine movement of hers to check the exuberance of the younger girl? I had no time to put your suggestion to enlist her into effect before the thing occurred. And now——"

"Now, I think we may count upon our day all together at Beaumanoir. But till then, and after it, Mariol, I mean to keep my distance from Miss Winstanley."

"The trouble was that you began doing it too suddenly. From the moment she caught sight of your glum countenance at supper the sparkle went out of things for her. But,

bon Dieu, what a gift she has, that untrained creature! Somebody ought to take charge of her musical education, and in a few years she would witch the world."

"There is something better for a pure, straightforward being like that to do than to witch the world behind footlights," said Clandonald doggedly. "I can't think of it for her."

"My advice to you is to get off at Queenstown," answered Mariol as they separated for the night.

"You are not sleepy? That's good, for I'm not, either, and I'll just send away Eulalie, and we'll go into my room and talk."

Posey's heart lightened with pleasure as she followed Miss Carstairs inside the pretty bower Eulalie's skill had contrived from her young lady's belongings for the voyage. What a contrast to the half of a dull inside cabin which Mr. Winstanley, in his simplicity, had accepted for Posey from the agent of whom he had purchased places; with the spinster room-mate humped under the bedclothes on the sofa; her clothes and hats hanging overhead distractedly; their steamer trunks and

bags encumbering the narrow space between hers and Posey's berths!

Here were unimagined comforts, order, nicety, a little brass bed with flowery curtains, softest pillows and duvets, a bath room opening out, with porcelain tub; an equipment for the toilet that astounded Posey, till then content with her little cotton night-gown trimmed with tatting, her kimono of cheap blue flannel bought ready-made, her one brush and comb, and tooth-brush, and bottle of Sozodont, her knitted slippers, and the steamer-pocket of blue denim with the motto "Bon voyage," presented to her on leaving Alison's Cross Roads by her friend the dressmaker! But she showed no more surprise than an Indian does on his first visit to the glories of the White Father at Washington. Truth to tell, she had already arrived at the stage of development where things tangible have become of secondary importance to feelings and emotions. She had passed, that evening, through so many varying phases of mental experience, that Helen Carstairs' new kindness seemed the opening of the gate of Heaven.

"Now if you feel like it, and think it will

do you good," said Helen, installing her in a cushioned chair of Madeira wicker-work, and, herself, perching school-girl fashion on the settee, "you must tell me what troubled you, though I think I can guess."

"He tried to kiss me, that hateful old mummy that I've done nothing but make fun of on the voyage," cried the girl, fiery blushes streaming into her face. "If he hadn't said such fool-words when he did it, I might have thought he was just like old Grandfather Billings of our town, that always dodders along in the sunshine and kisses the girls when they stop to speak to him, thinking they're their own grandmothers. But even Grandfather Billings has never kissed me. I hate it, and never would put up with it from a living soul, so when old Vereker tried it on, I boxed his ears, and boxed to hurt, too, and then I ran away. What business had he following me out on deck, anyway, when I'd said I wanted to be by myself? If daddy knew—but he shan't know, he's too good to trouble, and I reckon I can take care of myself."

She ended bravely, but one glance into

Helen's grave, kind face sent her again into tears.

"Oh! Miss Carstairs, don't mind me. Let me be a little while, and I'll promise not to bother you again. After you looked at me that time at supper, I seemed to shrink up into such a poor pretending creature. I saw in a flash how cheaply I'd been 'showing off.' It was mostly to make those people that looked down on me sit up on their hind legs, anyway! I felt common and half-bred beside you, whom I'd been trying so hard to imitate since we came aboard. I do want to be a lady, your kind, I do, I do. Not only for my own sake, and my mother's, who was a real one, but because—if you only knew——"

"I am ready to know," said Helen, after a pause, her voice, in spite of her, curiously flattened.

"I am engaged to marry a man, to whom it will mean everything that I shall be, let me say, all you are. And there's a great reason why I should try to please him in those things. How strange that I should want to tell you such an intimate secret, out of my very heart! But there is no other woman I can talk to,

and that look you gave me seemed to open every door within me!"

"I will help you if I can," Helen breathed, rather than spoke. Her spirit, wrestling with the certainty that crushed it, was yet ready to rise to generosity. Was it not what she had bid John Glynn do in the moment of his acutest suffering? Find a younger, fresher, more trustful life-partner than herself, and put swiftly out of mind their disastrous venture together that could not end in happiness! What right had she to be feeling these fierce heart-beats of rebellion against the child's superior claim upon him, these desperate yearnings to have him back again?

"I am ashamed to let you know what will make you think even less of me than you do. When I promised myself to John Glynn—there I've told you his name, but it doesn't matter—I did so because I thought it would make my dear daddy, who was in some sort his guardian and his father's best friend—happier than anything in the world. Also, I was flattered that he should ask me. Down at Alison's, where John lived as a boy, they think he has taken the head of his firm into business with him, and that all New York

looks on admiringly. He's about the greatest hero we have after Lee and Davis. He's a splendid man, Miss Carstairs, perhaps you *have* heard of him? I remember now, daddy said Mr. Carstairs had spoken well of John. When that Lady Channel Fleet had the cheek to say at supper, she considered the American men, as a rule, inferior to their women, and decidedly so to Englishmen, I could have flown at her, and asked her to wait till she'd seen John."

Helen, conscious that something of the same mental protest had formulated itself in her during the same period of provocation, could not forbear a smile. Fortunately, Miss Winstanley, being fairly launched upon her confidence, did not pause for answer or comment.

"You will see, then, that I do honestly mean to be what I ought, to John—that—I have no other wish or fancy—and yet there is another influence that's come without my seeking—one that could not bring me happiness. It frightens me to think of it. I don't know what to do, where to turn. Think of putting the thing of a day and hour against the other, the safe one, the true one! Yes,

it frightens me. Miss Carstairs, you are older and wiser than I, tell me what I shall do to conquer it?"

All the voices in Helen's heart sang in chorus, in answer to this simple and pathetic appeal. The voice of joy, the voice of temptation were louder for awhile than the others, but she dared not let them prevail. She had never been a demonstrative person, and the touching of strangers, under no matter what stress of sympathy, was an impossibility to her. She did not, therefore, "lock Posey in a warm embrace" and "kiss her upon the virgin brow," bidding her be of good cheer, as all would yet be well between John Glynn and herself. But she told her, calmly and dispassionately, that 'it is probable no girl ever grew up to womanhood to escape some errant fancy for a man whom she afterwards thanked God she had not been allowed by Destiny or her parents to marry. She counselled her to indulge in no dreams or reveries or self-questionings about the matter, but to keep to the pledge she had made, and give all her energies to the task of making a good man happy.

Posey brightened wonderfully during Miss

Carstairs' little lecture. As she ran off to bed, it was with the joyful step of a freed school-girl and the feeling that she was not altogether steeped in wickedness. Half-way down the corridor, she turned, ran back, and ventured to knock again at Miss Carstairs' door. Her errand was the very feminine one of asking Helen to be so good as to undo "two wretched hooks" in the region of her shoulder-blades; a service she knew Mrs. Gasher would never at that late hour be awake to perform for her. When Miss Carstairs opened the door, standing in the aperture in some surprise to know what was wanted, Posey felt sorry and puzzled to see that her new friend's eyes were filled with tears.

As Miss Winstanley, finally relieved from the apprehension of having to spend the night in a cuirass of white voile with many little pipings of satin and a good deal of scratchy net, crept in like a thief at her own cabin-door, her room-mate roused up and groaned dismally.

"Seems to me I'm to have not a wink of sleep to-night. Just as I'd settled down for my first nap, there came a stupid steward with a note for you. I told him to put it in

your berth and go out as quick as he could, and since then I haven't closed my eyes."

"Thank you. I'm sorry you are not resting well," said Posey, still under the influence of her recent gentle mood. "Is it anything you've eaten, do you think?"

"Eaten? I never eat at sea," sniffed the sufferer. "It's my nerves, as usual, and since you've roused me up completely, I'll thank you to mix me another trional powder, and not to turn up the light. While you're about it, you may's well step outside and get my rug off the rail, and put it over my poor feet. Blocks of ice they are, cold feet are constitutional in our family. Humph! Single fold, not double, I don't want to smother. I should think your father'd know better than to let a girl like you go traipsing around a ship alone at this hour of the night. Perhaps, if you'd heard what I did, since I've been lying here trying to count sheep and say the ten table, you'd haul in your horns a bit, and not think yourself such a museum wonder. The people in the next room were talking about you, and I heard the man say as plain as anything: 'If I wanted my daughter to keep her good name, I'd not let her go out on deck

at night with that gay old bird, Tom Vereker.' And the woman answered: 'Some people's heads are so turned with vanity and fine company, they don't take ordinary care. It's the talk of all the decks how she's laying herself out to catch that disreputable lord, and he and his French friend calling her "dead easy sport," in the smoking-room.'"

"Did any one say that such words had been actually used about me by either of those gentlemen?" asked Posey, stopping short, her eyes blazing in the dark.

"How do I know all that's said, lying here a wretched victim of nerves, and nobody caring if I live or die?"

"I ask you, only, was it stated that either of those gentlemen said anything approaching to those words of me?"

"For goodness' sake, speak lower, Miss Winstanley, you'll be overheard. Some people have no consideration for others, especially girls at night, when people are trying to fall asleep. If there's a race I consider utterly heartless, it is girls."

"I am not going to let you sleep or rest," went on the avenger, calmly taking off her

hat, "till you answer my question in plain words—yes or no."

"N-o-o. I don't know that it was actually *said*, but the lady inferred that Lord Clandonald and his friend couldn't *think* anything else, if you continued to give yourself away, as you've been doing."

"Very well! I understand. And, since we are due at Queenstown day after to-morrow, I shall ask you to oblige me by not addressing to me a syllable, good, bad or indifferent, so long as I have the misfortune to remain your room-mate. If we collide with something, and go down, don't even inquire of me where the life-preservers are. And now, since I want to read my note, I mean to turn on the electricity and do so comfortably, and you may wake or sleep, or go on inventing spiteful fables, whichever you prefer. From this moment, I am done with you."

Certainly, Posey knew how to take care of herself. But there was always a swift following of regret and penitence when she had let her clever tongue loose upon an opponent, and while the subdued spinster sobbed under her bedclothes, the girl rather miserably opened one of the ship's envelopes, to find,

written upon a slip of paper, in an angular and illegible, but educated, woman's hand these words:

"When next you invite a certain friend of yours to supply you with frocks and hats, take care that it is not within hearing of one who is well acquainted with Lord C——'s limited generosity to the reigning fancy of the hour. Better fix your hopes upon the older and more solvent of your swains. It will pay well, and be a less dangerous game for you."

As the insult burned upon the girl's understanding, it seemed to her that the world must stop revolving then and there. It was her first experience of the poison of anonymous correspondence, that, in an instant, ran through her veins, paralyzing her with shame and humiliation. How could she face daylight and the society of honest folk, with a stain of such suspicion upon her? What had she brought upon her honored father, upon her trustful lover, by exposing herself to such an imputation? Would Helen Carstairs ever speak to her again, if she knew what had been thought and said of Posey Winstanley?

She turned out the light, and cast herself upon her berth. Now, over the tumult of her

self-flagellations, arose the actual sound of a mighty wind arising to bear down upon the ship. It had come up suddenly, their room was upon the weather-side, and, in her already nervous state, the sounds seemed the shrieking of all the demons chained in hell. While the spinster, now avenged, snored peacefully through the tumult of elements outside, Posey lay wide-eyed, trembling, imagining all horrors of the sea, and praying for the comfort of Mrs. Gasher's friendly voice.

"If we are to be lost," passed through her mind, despairingly, "everything will be forgotten that has been said of me, and it is better so." She longed to go to her father, but dared not, considering his distance from her, and the unpleasant fact that he shared a stateroom with two other men. The silence of the ship seemed as unnatural as the failure of increase in its motion. The curtain drawn over their doorway swayed ever so slightly back and forth, there was no creaking of timbers or crash of crockery, or rolling of small objects upon the floor. A glass of water left on the washhand-stand was not disturbed in its equilibrium. Surely this was strange, weird,

unnatural, with such a tempest raging on the sea!

Now Posey decided that, on the whole, she did not wish to die. Driven by panic, she arose, still dressed as she had been for the supper, and stole out down the long, empty passage-ways upon a tour of investigation, to encounter no living soul save a sleepy night-steward standing under a light, to con an ancient newspaper.

The man looked up sleepily as the unwonted apparition drew near him. He recognized the beauty, and from her pallor and agitation decided she must be ill.

"Anything I can do for you, miss?" he asked politely.

"Oh! no. Nothing whatever," answered Posey hurriedly. "I was only not sleeping well, and feeling a little nervous in the storm."

"Storm, miss?" queried the steward abstractedly, swallowing a yawn.

"Yes, a fearful one. On our side, it blows like mad. Surely you must hear it?"

With the ghost of a smile hovering upon his face, the man walked over and gave a look out into the night.

"It *might* be half a gale," he said dubiously. "But you see, miss, in these ships we sort o' get out o' the way of knowing what is going on outside!"

Half a gale! Posey's inclination to resent the belittling statement went back to bed with her, but presently her sense of humor got the better of the other poignant emotions, and she laughed at her own alarms, of which the interruption had, on the whole, proved a wholesome one; and at last, completely wearied out, fell into deep sleep, amid the continued howling of the harmless wind.

The gay voyage that had begun so buoyantly passed, at the finish, beneath the shadow of a cloud. The first sight of land gave but a sorry welcome to the new-comers, as it immediately disappeared under a dense curtain of fog. The ship crept up the Irish coast to the melancholy tooting of the siren, answered by other craft, from ocean liners to humble trawlers, made Queenstown toward morning in an interval of clear weather, and, relapsing into the embrace of fog, came next evening finally to anchor for the night at some distance from Liverpool to await a safer oppor-

tunity of docking the monster, and letting her passengers ashore. During the dolorous hours preceding their final parting the disappointed passengers, before so friendly, smiling, intimate, seemed to draw away from each other, darkling and afraid. Smiles, jokes, good stories, civil speeches and compliments had been apparently packed up with sea rugs and steamer chairs. The decks, dripping and cheerless, offered no attraction to promenaders, the library was filled to oppression with forms bending listlessly over books that could not hold attention. Every desk held diligent scribblers, glaring suspiciously at each other through the top of the separating screen, their places awaited by more would-be correspondents impatient of delay. In the companion-ways, subdued people huddled together or walked over the unfortunate beings with buckets whose duty it is to swab the sticky linoleum underfoot. A reminiscent odor of their last sea-dinner arose to mingle with suggestions, coming none knew whence, of bilge, fresh paint, tarpaulin and wet ropes. The only thoroughly lively mortals to be seen were the stewards bustling everywhere; the tidy stewardesses, with their

cap-streamers flying; and the ladies' maids and valets who hoped to get their charges early to bed, thus advancing their own time of freedom and farewell.

At a comparatively early hour, the usual spaces where passengers assemble were deserted, most people giving up the pretence of being exhilarated by near approach to the British Isles. The dining-saloon displayed still a few groups sitting around the tables sipping from glasses, reading or talking; the smoking-room alone retained its usual features of cards and conviviality.

Here, toward ten o'clock, Clandonald, looking more than commonly bored, arose from a game in which he had not acquitted himself with brilliancy, and strolled outside, alone.

Since the night of the supper, he had not been called upon to put into effect his stern resolution of eschewing Miss Winstanley's society. She had come to her meals late, or early, contriving to avoid more than a passing contact with her acquaintances at table. While the rest of them, notably Bobby Vane, deplored this circumstance, attributing it to a caprice or an indisposition; while Miss Bleecker secretly chuckled with delight that

the enemy had so soon struck her colors, and Helen wondered in silence why there was no following up on Posey's part of the promising beginning of a friendship between them; while even the astute Mariol was nonplussed at the young girl's sudden drop in spirit and voluntary abdication of her past as reigning sovereign, Clandonald felt himself a prey to more acute and genuine feeling concerning her than he had ever dreamed of experiencing. So far from going ashore at Queenstown, it was now his ardent wish to stay on the ship till he saw the last of Miss Winstanley at Liverpool; since Mr. Winstanley had announced that instead of running up to town on the special steamer train with their friends, his daughter had taken a fancy to see Wales, and they would accordingly stop over at Chester.

Up to the moment, perhaps, when Clandonald had interposed himself between Posey and her annoyer, it had not occurred to him that he could feel for her anything more than man's honest delight in youth and extraordinary beauty, as well as the titillation that came to his mental part from her amusing indifference to his rank, her straightforward appeal to his comradeship. Even the fleeting

revelation in her gaze that had occasioned his resolve to fly, had excited until then in him little more than regret at the misadventure.

When he had brusquely stood himself in Vereker's way, Helen Carstairs had not observed what caused a current of pleasure to run through his veins, and a quick rush of protective tenderness toward Posey to fill and overflow his heart. Involuntarily the girl had pressed nearer to him, slipping her arm through his, and, for the few seconds that this attitude endured, he had wanted never to part with her again!

Then she had started away from him, almost guiltily, and Miss Carstairs had carried her off in tears! From thenceforward a blank, as far as a return to their old relations went! Clandonald, puzzling himself wofully to know what he had done to alienate her, had spent hours in meditation upon the theme. Now that he had lost her, the possession of her guileless friendship, still more of her possible love, had become of supreme value and importance; to win it he was ready to forfeit anything, even to throwing over his excellent and devoted Mariol, whose keen

glances worried him, and whose wit and wisdom had temporarily lost their flavor.

And so the last hour of the last evening had come around, and his last chance to speak with her had gone! He knew how it would be on the morrow. Nothing less conducive to an exposition of the tender passion in any of its phases can be found than the landing on a foggy day at Liverpool, with its crowds and coal smoke, its lowering skies, and dingy surroundings, its hustling porters and watermen, the rush and rumble of a great industrial city beginning at the water's edge, after the inspiring solitudes of three thousand miles of salt water.

He would see her only amid a confusion of sights and sounds that would effectually prevent any but the most banal phrases of adieu. She would pass away from him and become as had all the other women he had met, like the dissolving foam wreaths in their track across the Atlantic. He was annoyed with himself for feeling it so much. The thing was out of all reason. Perhaps, after he had speech with her once more, he might better realize what an ass he had been to imagine she cared for him. Things, in short, would

adjust themselves on a common-sense footing.

But he could not get speech with her. An overture to that effect, somewhat clumsily conveyed before dinner-time, had been rejected by Miss Winstanley in such terms that Clandonald felt vexed and mortified, wondering what or who could have set her so against him.

And here, at last, when he stepped out on deck, into the glare of the electric lights, intending to return to his own room and prosaically go to bed, the Fates would have it that he ran upon Mr. Winstanley shivering like a true Southron in the raw atmosphere around the ship's anchorage, his daughter clinging to his arm, looking most lovely in her furs, her cheeks of a vivid carmine, the little locks on her forehead drifting and curving in the moist air.

"Pretty dismal lookout, isn't it?" said the old gentleman cheerily. "Kind o' evenin' that makes one think o' a tumbler full of hot Scotch, and a big snappin' wood-fire, with a couple o' little darkies tumblin' over each other to bring in the fat pine knots."

"If I could fly with the crow over in that

direction," said Clandonald, pointing toward the invisible shore, "I know of a hearthside not far off, where at least part of those conditions would be fulfilled to me! It is in the house of an uncle of mine, where as a boy I considered it Paradise to go, and still do, sometimes for the shooting. One of those homes of merry England (a misnomer now, I grant you) that you have expressed so kind a desire to see, Miss Winstanley. I sincerely hope, by the way, that you haven't forgotten your promise to persuade Mr. Winstanley to give me a day at Beaumanoir, and that you'll settle upon a date with Miss Carstairs—who has also agreed to honor me—before we leave the ship."

"You are very kind, but our plans are undecided," said the girl, in a low, tremulous tone.

"Seems as if the sea hadn't agreed with daughter this little bit," observed Mr. Winstanley. "She sort o' thinks she'll stop by a few days, along the road, before we get to London. So this is a British fog? A No. 1, I reckon. I hope you won't think me impolite if I call it a regular searcher, sir. At this moment I feel it in the marrow o' my

bones. But anything to please the ladies, and when Posey said she'd a headache that wouldn't leave her till she got a turn outside, out we came to admire your English coast scenery, I tell her— Great Scott, Posey, I've gone and done it, now!"

He had been fumbling in his breast pocket for a handkerchief, and drew forth the missing article with a vexed look upon his mild old face.

"Done what, daddy?"

"Left my letter of credit in a coat in the steamer-trunk that was packed for storage in Liverpool. And they've likely carried it out a'ready! I must find that steward right away, dearie, and tip him to hunt it up."

"Let me go with you, please."

"You'd only be in the way. If you want to finish our walk, stay here, and I'll come right back for you. Perhaps Lord Clandonald wouldn't mind——"

"Oh! no, father! I'll stay alone."

The voice was decided, even positive. Clandonald, bowing, moved away in another direction than that taken by Mr. Winstanley.

It was over. He had done with Posey Winstanley and all her kind. If she were so ca-

pricious as her actions indicated, this decision was a thoroughly good thing.

But all the same, like Lot's wife, he looked back. Posey had taken out her pocket handkerchief, and was wiping her eyes with the little wisp half the ship had picked up after her. Clandonald, in two strides, returned to her side.

"I am not going to push myself into your company. Just two minutes, and I'll be off. But I think you owe it to me to say why you are treating me like a scoundrel or an impostor."

"Oh! not that, not that!" she cried piteously.

"Have I done anything to forfeit a place among your decent acquaintances since that time you clung to my arm and—I mean since you let me feel that I might stand between you and insult——"

"Nothing. I believe in you just the same, and always shall."

"Thank you for so much, at any rate. But—you believe in me, in *spite* of what?"

"Oh! Lord Clandonald, how can I say it to you?" she exclaimed, driven to the wall.

"I have stood a good deal of evil speaking

in my time," he said, in a grim undertone. "And if it helps to clear the atmosphere between us, I can stand more."

"It is not you only, I, too, have been the victim of cruel and slanderous sayings. I have not told my dear father, who is so unsuspicious. I wouldn't have him suffer as I have for the world. For the last twenty-four hours I have been receiving, in all sorts of odd ways that I cannot trace, anonymous notes about you and me that have cut me to the quick."

"Let me see one of them," he said, growing slightly pale.

"Do you think I'd keep the horrid, poisonous things? Not a half hour since I tore the whole batch into little bits, and threw them overboard. Perhaps . . . I ought to tell you, they were written by a woman, who says——"

"Go on, Miss Winstanley."

"—That you wronged her cruelly and ruined her whole life."

"I thought so," he said, between his teeth. His face had grown so dark and bitter that Posey hardly knew the man. "There is only

one who could—but how, in God's name, did she get aboard this ship?"

"I suppose the writer thought I would not have courage to tell you—but I always believe in speaking out, you know."

"It may be some low practical joke at our expense," he suggested, his eyes lightening.

"No, even I, who never saw an anonymous letter before, could tell that this is horridly real. Whoever it is, Lord Clandonald, you—and now I—have a desperate enemy. I am threatened with a scene, an exposure, she calls it, that will disgrace me utterly, if I am seen again with you."

"Let me risk it for you! Let me stand between you and all liars, evil speakers and slanderers, for always—" the man exclaimed passionately, then stopped short.

There was that in the girl's look that startled him from his unconsidered speech. The staring white light of the electric globe immediately above them showed the bloom forsaking her young face, the lips trembling violently.

"It proves how little we know of each other that I should let you say such words to one who has no right to hear them," she said,

recovering herself to speak in her natural tone. "But if we mayn't be friends, after this, please remember that I have believed you, not your slanderer. Now, as my father doesn't seem to be coming back, and this is not my native air, if it is yours, I will say good-by. We'll be too busy and too cross to want to speak to each other to-morrow morning, even if it were wise. If you meet me again, it will be a different Pamela Winstanley, one who knows more, perhaps, and makes fewer mistakes, but who'll never forget your kindness on this voyage."

Clandonald was bewildered at her rapid change back into the speech of conventionality, her self-control, her determination to put him definitely away from her. His brain was also dizzy with thoughts of the dread presence on shipboard of the one woman he had hoped never to see on earth again. What he might, could or would have answered Miss Winstanley was not said.

They stood together uncertainly for one confusing moment in what seemed a moist gray world, haunted by skulking shadows in tarpaulin, the chill wind of the Channel whipping them, overhead the repeated rau-

cous roar of the fog-horn—and then she was gone, melted away into encompassing gloom! His ship-idyl, his mad brief temptations of a few moments since, were past. He was back again in England with his bitter memories and cheerless future.

To Mariol he gave, before bed-time, an account of the outrage to which Miss Winstanley had been subjected, begging him to try to trace out the offender, and silence her at any cost.

The Frenchman, promising to do this, and relieved at the collapse of his friend's nascent affair with Miss Winstanley, was hardly surprised, on awaking next day, and finding their ship safely alongside her dock in Liverpool, to be told that his lordship, impatient of delay, had gone ashore during the night in the tender that had nosed its way to the fog-bound liner to carry off the mails, leaving his servant to follow with his luggage.

Mariol, after attending unsuccessfully to the business entrusted to him by Clandonald, encountered Miss Carstairs, her chaperon and maid, on deck awaiting the summons to go ashore. He stood by them, commenting with amusement upon the sudden disintegra-

tion of the ardent intimacies of the voyage. To judge from appearances, the chief aim of the passengers was now to rid themselves of one another as promptly as possible. People who had sworn fidelity over night were offish, mysterious, absorbed in petty anxieties about customs, telegrams, trains and tips. As usual to inexperienced tourists, the latter question arose to be a cloud that was ultimately to overshadow the glories of European travel. What attendants had been remunerated according to service done, what countenances had darkened, who had seemed satisfied, was discussed in whispers between anxious family groups. Farewell sentiments bestowed upon friends one thought one had seen the last of were found to be superfluous, since the recipients were sure to be found again provokingly popping up everywhere; on the gangway, on the docks, and facing the customs officers. Lucky if one were not to be thrust together with them into the same railway carriage, all to arrive in London hating each other heartily!

M. de Mariol, without appearing to do so, had scanned narrowly the outgoing crowd from the steamer. No trace had appeared,

here or elsewhere, of the familiar figure of Clandonald's former wife. A suggestion occurring to him that the excursive Ruby had been last heard of in America, and was probably returning under an alias, made the search in the passenger lists a futile one. Whatever were the facts in the history of this obnoxious and insufferable woman, he must give her up for the present as a bad job. He felt almost inclined to believe that some one else had thrown suspicion upon her, in order to cover a low attack upon Miss Winstanley and Clandonald.

As he and Miss Carstairs started a little later to walk together up the inclined plane leading to the Euston Special, they beheld, in the street, Mr. and Miss Winstanley getting into a four-wheeler laden with archaic trunks, from the window of which Posey waved to them a sober last good-by.

At the same moment they were asked to step aside to give place to an invalid chair containing Mr. Vereker, greenish-gray of complexion, scowling at all the world, and escorted by his nurse and doctor. No vestige remained of the effusive host, the ladies' gallant, the purveyor of choicest scandal from

the clubs! His wife and valet, with Mr. Charley Brownlow and a train of servants and porters, brought up the rear of the cortége, pressing importantly forward to reach their private car.

Miss Bleecker, whose soul always melted tenderly to the sorrows of the rich, could not lose this opportunity. Stepping up briskly, she proffered her condolence to the suffering magnate, to be repelled by a savage gesture and a snarl of annoyance at being spoken to, that caused the irate lady to retire in crimson confusion.

She was the more perturbed by the incident, because not only did her dear friend Mrs. Vereker decline to make amends for her husband's ill-manners, but she murmured audibly to Mr. Brownlow that "Sally Bleecker never did know how to stay in the back row." Additionally, the chaperon's discomfiture was increased by the appearance of Lord and Lady Channel Fleet, who with their depressed maid hugging a jewel-case containing the well-known turquoises, were hastening away to the joys of home and their native land. Lady Channel Fleet enjoyed the little scene. She had just whispered to her hus-

band that she'd be thankful to get to their own house, where at last they wouldn't see Americans or hear them talk.

The next acquaintance to pass by Mariol and Miss Carstairs was Prince Zourikoff, who, from between two porters carrying some Aztec images he had secured in Mexico, gave them an abstracted nod to supplement his polite farewell achieved on board. Dear old Graf von Bau was already in the embraces of his loving spouse and two gigantic daughters, who were kissing him violently upon both cheeks, and, attended by a secretary, governess and maid, had come over from Berlin to meet and reclaim their wanderer.

"Thus vanish Miss Winstanley and her little court!" said Mariol in Miss Carstairs' ear. "It is true, Bobby Vane clung to her till forcibly taken possession of by his elder brother, whom the Kenningtons sent down to fetch him safely home. The lad was sufficiently hard hit, and if the young lady had been ambitious of making an English alliance of rank, she might have secured him—to the disgust of the Kenningtons, of course, since Bobby has nothing, and the Winstanleys are evidently in modest circumstances."

"I believe I can surprise you there," said Helen. "As we are all scattering, it can make no difference to any one—certainly on this side the globe," she added, with a faint sigh.

"I like an *après coup.* Please tell me," answered he, smiling.

"First, tell me something. If you like, that is, if not, let it go. From what you have observed, does it strike you that a friend of Miss Winstanley's would be justified in thinking that Lord Clandonald has fallen in love with her?"

"Lord Clandonald left the ship without making any arrangement for a future meeting with the young lady," said Mariol, diplomatically. "And to my best knowledge, there is no likelihood of his seeing her, unless by chance."

Helen drew a long breath, but not one of relief.

"Because," she went on, "her good old father came yesterday to thank me for some imagined kindness to his daughter, and, in the course of conversation, told me that he had recently become the owner of a large—very large—fortune, but in his desire to protect

her from 'interested' suitors, had determined to keep the knowledge of it from her. He asked my advice as to the wisdom of the step, poor soul! I told him that I had had some experience of paternal mismanagement in this regard, in the case of a friend of mine —and that I thought Posey ought certainly to know."

"I agree with you," commented Mariol, astonished, and, for Clandonald's sake, just a tiny bit depressed. "What a difference it would have made on board, had it been suspected that our social sovereign was possessed of a golden foundation for her throne. And since you have mentioned my friend Clandonald's fancy for the young lady——"

"It was rather unfair for me not to have told you at once," interrupted Miss Carstairs, "that I am aware of reasons why such a fancy on his part for Mr. Winstanley's heiress, or of her for him, would have produced disastrous results in America."

"She is, then—" began Mariol, trying to keep the vexation from his voice.

"Mr. Winstanley said that he thought it best for any one interested in his daughter that there should be no concealment of her

engagement to marry a man whom she has long known—of whom he thoroughly approves, and that his daughter was willing to have it known. A man whom such a marriage will help in the best way, since when they became engaged, he knew nothing whatever, nor does he now, of her improved fortunes."

"Lucky fellow!" said Mariol, swallowing a grimace. "But I must own to you that the circumstance robs the fair Posey of a good deal of her interest in my eyes. You, Miss Carstairs, are so far removed from their estate of happy barbarism, you are so broad, so far-seeing, you won't object to my suggesting that the image of Miss Winstanley's mate chosen from among her friends of early years does not allure me. He is, in fact, a total extinguisher of my desire to meet her after she shall have become his wife. Now, own that you yourself have a shudder of mild distaste when you think of what he must be!"

"On the contrary," said Miss Carstairs, distinctly, "I have the pleasure of knowing Miss Winstanley's fiancé; and I consider him not only one of the most manly men, but

the truest gentleman in the circle of my acquaintance."

"Helen, here is a compartment that will just hold you and me and Eulalie, comfortably, and we will tip the guard to let us have it to ourselves," came in Miss Bleecker's penetrating tones. "Good-by, M. de Mariol, we shall always remember our pleasant voyage, and I shall treasure that clever thing you wrote in my birthday book. Sorry not to have seen Lord Clandonald to say good-by, but we shall all meet again, of course, people always do. Don't forget if you are in town, any time, we are in Curzon Street for a fortnight, and then Paris, Hotel Westminster. Eulalie, you have Miss Carstairs' black jacket? Porter, look out for those umbrellas in the netting, put my dressing bag beside me, the tea-basket overhead—where is the other rug? Oh! I see. Ten pieces, all right, porter, here you are, for you and your mate. *What*, not enough? Ample, and more than you deserve. Helen, how could you give him another shilling, when you know that is what shows any one with half an eye you are just from the other side?"

CHAPTER VI

THE luncheon at Beaumanoir, although lacking the young lady for whose delectation it had been proposed, came off to the satisfaction of at least four of the five people present, viz., Miss Bleecker, whom it had been impossible to omit; M. de Mariol, who, cynicism to the contrary, was delighted with a chance of showing Helen Carstairs the noble old place in a lambent day of mid-October; Helen, herself, frankly pleased with the entertainment; and good old Lady Campstown, whose mind having long set itself upon the thought of her nephew's remarriage with a wealthy American girl, as a happy issue out of all his difficulties, chose to construe the occasion into a presentation to her of the future chatelaine whose dollars were to stop the chinks in Clandonald's ancestral roofs, and her virtues to gild anew the escutcheon dimmed by her unworthy predecessor.

"If she's an American, she'll probably go straight," thought Lady Campstown, after

having first informed herself through a New York lady so long resident in London as to suffer acute pangs upon being reminded of the place of her nativity, that Helen's father was "*the* Mr. Carstairs whom everybody had heard about." When Clandonald had proposed to his aunt to preside over his little party, her ladyship had not dared ask him the direct question that was burning upon her lips. She had contented herself with his answer to her rallying query whether upon his travels he had met any of those wonderful girls from the States the modern novelists write about, that he fancied the supply would always be equal to the demand for that commodity. And when Miss Carstairs, so quiet, lovely and distinguished in mien and manner, appeared amid the faded chintz of the great drawing-room at Beaumanoir, admiring its choice contents with knowledge and without gush, treating Lady Campstown exactly as she ought to be treated, the reality of the old gentlewoman's hopes seemed as near as it was grateful.

Even Miss Bleecker shone in a reflected light, and Lady Campstown pronounced her, afterwards, a most agreeable, chatty person.

As she conducted both visitors through the principal rooms of her childhood's home, her little ladyship's frail face and figure seemed to have stepped down for the occasion from a frame of which the gilding had worn away. Helen was in turn charmed by her simplicity and frankness, and the two gravitated together naturally. The men found them in the picture gallery, where Lady Campstown was destined to receive her first disillusion, in the fact that her nephew in asking Miss Carstairs if she were ready to see the white peacocks on their famous strutting ground, invited M. de Mariol to come, too!

But the good aunt utilized her talk alone with Miss Bleecker to speak openly about Lord Clandonald's excellences, his wrongs at the hands of Ruby Darien, his desirable domestic traits, the subjects, in fine, rarely neglected when the female proprietor or backer of a man in the marriage market sees her chance. Lady Campstown was so genuinely unselfish in her desire to build up again the shattered fabric of her dear Clan's life, that another than the pachydermatous Miss Bleecker would have perceived the pathos of the situation, and condoned the openness of

the attack. Miss Bleecker, however, was quite on her guard. She did not consider Clandonald anything to jump at in the way of a match for Helen. She was certain of Mr. Carstairs' disapproval; she knew that he could not be brought to supply cash for the palpably exigent repairs at Beaumanoir, and lastly, and more to the point, she had no idea of relinquishing while she could hold it, her comfortable billet as Miss Carstairs' chaperon. But she was aware that Lady Campstown, while possessing but a small and meagre establishment in London, had a pretty villa at Cannes, where she was a personage of undoubted influence and wide acquaintance. And as Miss Bleecker's doctor had advised the air of that favored resort for her relaxed throat, and Helen did not care where they went, Cannes was the secret object of the chaperon's intended movement southward at the season's height.

Therefore, the conversation, while the two elders strolled or sat under immemorial yews, and enjoyed grapes and peaches plucked in an enchanting old walled garden, waxed upon one side, more gracious and evasive, on the other, more perplexed and yet more hopeful.

From all she could gather, Lady Campstown was convinced that Helen had been sent by Providence for Clan's regeneration. The hint given on their return to the house, that the American ladies would be in Cannes after Christmas, to remain there until joined probably by Mr. and Mrs. Carstairs in the well-known yacht, "Sans Peur," seemed to fit into her plans. A further suggestion from the dowager, that Miss Bleecker and her charge would allow Lady Campstown to have the pleasure of introducing them to some people and places in the south, came so quickly, and was accepted so suavely, that the stately little lady was herself a little startled and taken aback by it.

At this moment Clandonald and his other guests stepped in through a window opening upon a stone-paved court with fountains and statues and ancient trees, enclosed in walls of ivy and maiden-hair fern, reproducing prettily one of those haunts of Pan at Villa d'Este in Tivoli, adored by a former owner. Helen had been sitting upon a lichen-grown stone bench, too lapped in pure pleasure to want to move. A stable-clock striking somewhere back of shrubberies, had warned her

that it was time for them to be thinking of their train up to town; and she rose regretfully.

"It has been a day to string upon Time's rosary," she said to her host, to whom she yielded the greater credit for his hospitality, because she saw that he had been worried and abstracted, and that it was Mariol's continued sparkle of wit and bonhomie that had really lent the occasion its subtle charm.

"It is very kind of you to have been willing to give me so much of your valuable time," he answered, with an effort to throw off what was possessing him, "and it has been a pleasant second chapter of our voyage."

"I wanted to tell you and M. de Mariol before we separate," went on Miss Carstairs, who had all day been trying for an opportunity to bring this in, and failed, simple as the matter seemed, "that I had, this morning only, a letter from Miss Winstanley. They decided, you know, to put off their visit to London till some later date, and have been wandering through the apple country of South Devon, to see the orchards and the cider-making. Some book Mr. Winstanley read had tempted him. They were to stop at Torquay,

thence going to Dover and the Continent."

"Very nice—and very American," said Clandonald. "Fancy running after an apple-crop the moment one lands in Britain, because some man has put it into a novel! I hope Miss Winstanley has recovered from her indisposition?"

"She seemed to be well and happy. She asked to be kindly remembered to you and M. de Mariol."

Clandonald's courtesy had taken wings, in the emotion of a deeper sort that overcame him inconveniently. He had hoped to carry off easily this inevitable talk about the girl who had laid so strong a hold upon his broken life. But he said nothing at all, while Mariol, as usual, came to the rescue.

"I have been telling Clandonald the two interesting facts developed by you concerning our Alabama friend," he said, gracefully. "And we both unite in asking you to convey to her our best congratulations upon her intended marriage."

"What a glorious copper beech!" exclaimed Helen, suddenly looking away past its owner to where the trees arose like a fire fountain from velvet sward. "I beg your

pardon. I will give her the message when I answer her characteristic letter. Perhaps I ought to have said before that, in a postscript, she asked me to tell you both of her engagement to Mr. Glynn, should I not have already done so."

Lady Campstown, having taken cordial leave of her nephew's guests, whom de Mariol escorted back to their private hotel in Curzon Street, remained over with Clandonald at Beaumanoir for tea. They drank it, thanks to a perfectly warm and well-aired afternoon, under the beech tree extolled by Miss Carstairs. Clandonald's dogs, the only friends of man who do not disappoint or change, clustered around his knee, a homely but human Schipperke gluing her faithful head upon her master's boot. The day, the hour, the pleasant rite, the dear old woman whose thin, pearl-white fingers twinkled among the tea cups as she looked over at him from time to time in a sort of speechless longing, touched and pleased the returned traveller, but could not cheer his melancholy.

Finally Lady Campstown took heart of grace to go to the point direct.

"I'm sorry to see you so down, Clan, my dear boy," she said, in handing him his second cup. "To-day, of all days, when you have had such a charming visitor. I can't tell you how well I am pleased with Miss Carstairs. You must know."

"Delighted, I'm sure, Aunt Lucy," he answered, with refrigerating vagueness. "But to talk of less agreeable subjects, I'm sorry to say Ruby has broken loose again, and is annoying me horribly. Having failed recently to make a scene for me—and another person—after her own heart, she has taken to writing me infernal hypocritical letters, saying she's back in England, stone-broke, ill, penitent, Lord knows what, and must have money."

"The old cry!" exclaimed Lady Campstown hotly. "Don't answer her, Clan, treat her as if you were locked in behind walls, and she in the street, outside."

"Her capacity for inventing malice and mischief is too great. She will find some way to circumvent me. Her price of peace is hard cash, and so for the present, I can breathe free again."

"You have been weak enough——" began his aunt, despairingly.

"I am not the only one involved," he said shortly. "Now, Aunt Lucy, say no more to me about it. I only wished to put you on your guard against any assault she might make upon your compassion."

"I am safe from that!" said the little lady grimly, and indeed, for the moment, she looked so, in her splendid wrath and scorn. Clandonald did not pursue the subject, and something warned her that neither was this the time for pursuance of the light vision of the American girl whom she had fondly pictured taking Ruby's place in the desolate old house. They talked of family matters, of Clan's travels, of things present and to come until Lady Campstown and her maid were obliged to leave. When her nephew had put her into the brougham to go to the station, Lady Campstown rallied her courage for a final appeal.

"You'll drop in for luncheon, tea or dinner whenever you've nothing better, won't you, dear boy?" she asked, surveying him wistfully. "You know I go out so little I'm apt to be always there. I'm to have luncheon

on Tuesday, and go to some pictures with these pleasant friends of yours who've just left us; and, Clan, dear, isn't it nice that they're coming to Cannes this winter? Miss Carstairs' father is to be there in the yacht. He must be a very interesting man. Such a power, one can't fail to—oh! thank you, Jenkins" (this to the gardener, arriving with a huge nosegay of late roses and chrysanthemums, and a basket of ruddy peaches), "they are most lovely, I am sure. You will certainly not fail to make me that promised visit in January? It seemed so lonely, last year, nobody inhabiting your room. Come, promise, Clan, and I know you will never break your word!"

"I am afraid, Aunt Lucy," he said, giving her a final loving kiss, "that I had better not promise anything, just now, if I'm to keep up my good reputation in your eyes. Think what you like as to my being spooney about a pretty American. But it is arranged between Mariol and myself—though we can't agree about our destination—that we are to set out for somewhere early next week. Mariol leans toward Tibet, I to the Balkans. To decide it, we shall probably toss up a sover-

eign. But this much is certain—off we go."

It was not until December, when Lady Campstown was fairly established at Villa Julia, on the slope of the Californie, under house-walls obscured by bourgainvilia and arbutilon and Gloire de Dijon roses, that she felt in the least assuaged of her disappointment. She had left London swathed in a yellow fog of appalling density, had run down to Dover in an atmosphere of pea-soup; had found Paris under weeping skies; had traversed France in a murky mist; and only on waking up in Cannes next morning had renewed acquaintance with the sun.

As she looked out of her window, the olives and palms seemed to wave a welcome to the south. The sea laughed in every ripple of its wide expanse, the mountains slept under their veil of azure, the light over all was almost intolerably bright. The flowers that she so well loved, blooming overhead and underfoot, springing from wall crannies, gladdening and glorying every available spot of earth, made her ladyship feel once more like her own even-tempered, happy self!

She had not heard from the wanderers in the Balkans, but had felt resigned that dear

Clan had not pushed on to that dreadful far-away Tibet, where men were flayed alive if they happened not to please the rulers upon whose land they were trespassing, which would have been so much worse! She and her maid, and a servant or two brought out from England, occupied themselves for a day in unpacking and readjusting ornaments, putting flowers and plants about the rooms, and looking over the garden, a lovely tiny place where roses ran riot, and palm trees waved their feathered tops or clashed together their spiked leaves with a little metallic ring, when the breeze stirred them from their majestic calm.

There were many finer, many larger, many more cared-for gardens in the town, though none that gave more satisfaction to its owner. Lady Campstown knew and loved every inch of it, but the spot most often resorted to by her, in hot sunshine, was a tunnel cut in a thicket of bamboos terminating her domain, from which a gate led out under the wall of the adjoining lordly pleasure house called "Villa Reine des Fées." Above this wall arose the symmetrical shafts of a cypress avenue, into which, and far beyond it, Lady Campstown had been accustomed to pene-

trate at will, through a little green door hidden by verdure, placed there for the convenience of the gardeners. The lodge-keeper of this deserted dwelling, to whose child her ladyship had ministered in illness, and all the other employees of the place, had always made welcome the little figure in black, wearing a mushroom hat and carrying a long tortoise-shell stick, who from time to time appeared among the alleys and under the flowery pergolas of a veritable fairyland of trees and turf and shrubs and blossoms.

The dwelling at Reine des Fées, sheltered from prevailing winds by a thick olive grove resting like a gray cloud upon the hillside above it, was of considerable size and pretension. Ascending, by a long flight of white marble steps, the two terraces with their mosaic pavements and marble balustrades, over which orange and lemon trees hung their fruit and flowers, one reached an imposing portal, where roses climbed upon the white façade of the many-windowed house, to fall back in rivulets of bloom. The gardens were a marvel of skilfully massed semi-tropical shrubbery and trees, shutting out the view of other villas and revealing at happy turns

vistas of the Mediterranean, the two islands, and the blue jagged line of the Esterels; while tall box-hedges, cypresses, fountains and pergolas wedded the tender grace of Italy to the warm witchery of Provence.

The place had been originally constructed by a wealthy Russian as a bower for his young wife who had died there in early married life; and for a long time had remained unoccupied, although scrupulously kept up.

Upon the death of the owner it had passed to his younger brother who, intending to live in it according to his luxurious tastes, had put in "lifts," baths, and sundry up-to-date conveniences; had renewed the furniture, china and glass, prepared the stables for many horses, and then vanished from sight of man into a house he had in the Caucasus—melancholy mad!

For two years Villa Reine des Fées had now been in the market for a tenant, yet none had presented himself. Whether or not the house had a name for bringing ill-luck to its inhabitants, or that the price fixed upon it was prohibitively high, it had remained vacant, as before. Lady Campstown could not regret this circumstance.

So long the enchanted ground behind the rose-wall had seemed an annex to her own modest property, she begrudged the idea of its overflowing with noisy gay people, with their dinners and dances, their motor cars puffing up the drive, their tennis matches and tea-parties, piano-practising and perhaps spoiled children and dogs, to invade her sylvan solitudes.

The one fate that Lady Campstown kept in reserve as the most painful that could possibly overtake Villa Reine des Fées, was for it to be inhabited by Americans. Now, upon her return (although recently born again, as it were, to a new sense of the excellent possibilities of her transatlantic kinsfolk!) she learned with dismay, from her gardener, that the house had actually been leased to an American family, who were to arrive the following day! Details of the calamity she could not at first bring herself to acquire. It was enough that her worst fears for her cherished playground were about to be realized. She turned pale at thought of the changes sure to come.

Directly after luncheon Lady Campstown took down her mushroom hat and an Inver-

ness cape that her maid had hung on a peg in the entry, armed herself with her tortoise-shell stick—a gift from Clandonald, by the way—and trotted down the walk of her own garden leading out under the bamboos to the little green door in her neighbor's wall. This was open, and she went in, sadly resolved to make a final pilgrimage to all the familiar spots henceforward to be blocked from her view as effectually as newspaper paragraphs by the ink-marks of a Russian censor.

The day was glorious, earth, sea and sky lustrous with intense sunshine, the air filled with odors of orange-blossom and violet, jasmine and rose, the palms bending gently under a summer breeze. Never had the grounds of Villa Reine des Fées seemed in more perfect order. She gave one glance up at the gleaming house-front above the stately balustrades, and saw that its windows were open, new curtains fluttering in the breeze. In the loggia adjoining the boudoir of the poor little dead princess, wicker chairs, gayly cushioned, were grouped under the rose wreaths. The signs of coming habitation were too evident.

Lady Campstown would not look again.

She saw coming toward her, beneath the arch of palms, a very tall young woman, modishly attired. Page 169.

Sorrowfully she directed her steps along the lower terrace, her tortoise-shell stick tapping impatiently upon the renaissance birds and beasts of its pavement. She even hoped not to meet any of the friendly Provençals who worked upon the place, with whom she had been wont to stop and talk about themselves and families, the prospects of the flower-crop for neighboring cultivators, and affairs of the town in general.

At some distance from the house this terrace was rounded into a lookout, commanding a wondrous avenue of palms, their trunks enwrapped in roses and jasmine, at the end of which the hillside fell sharply away, revealing an unimaginably lovely view of the sea and islands. From here, as the visitor now seated herself to gaze her last at a favorite prospect, she saw coming toward her, beneath the arch of palms, between borders of violets, a very tall young woman, modishly attired in white embroidered cloth, with a large white-plumed hat that breathed of the Rue de la Paix, in Paris.

Lady Campstown wished that she could believe this engaging person to be some one who, like herself, had strayed into Villa

Reine des Fées through curiosity—a guest from one of the adjacent smart hotels.

But she could not. She knew in her British soul that it was none other than one of the temporary owners of the property, and that she herself stood revealed a trespasser. In her intense vexation, the dowager arose again, striking her stick on the hot marble underfoot, till two little green lizards scampered away in fright at its sharp resonance.

"I beg your pardon," she said in her well-bred old voice, "I live in the next house, and of course had no idea that the villa was yet inhabited."

"Please don't speak of it," was the surprisingly friendly answer. (The girl was thinking, "Here, surely, is the Fairy Godmother.") "We decided at the last minute to come a day earlier, so anxious were we to get out of gloomy, wet Paris. You see, my father has been very ill, and the doctors rather wanted to hurry him to Provence. We took the night train, arriving this morning, and already he seems to feel the benefit, and is now getting a good sleep."

As she spoke she came up upon the terrace, and stood by Lady Campstown's side.

"I am glad to hear it," answered the old lady, forgetting her resentment. "I should explain that this house has been so long unoccupied, I have felt at liberty to stray in from time to time, and see the flowers and so——"

"Indeed, you are not to say another word," said the hostess, with pretty emphasis. "If you had the least idea how I was just bursting to let out of me some of my delight!"

"'Bursting to let out of me'!" Lady Campstown was certain that she knew no one who would have been responsible for that peculiar phrase, but the joyous appeal of the young voice and eyes, the radiantly smiling mouth, were not to be resisted.

"You feel it, then?" she said, smiling in return.

"Down to the ground!" said the tall girl. "I don't believe I ever had such thrills in my life before. I've been walking up and down under these oranges and lemons and palms, wondering if it can be I? To think we're to have this little heaven all to ourselves for daddy to get well in! You see, there are only my father and myself, and we know very few

people over here in Europe. We are Americans."

"I believe so," said Lady Campstown, with restraint.

"The villa was taken for us through our doctor in Paris, who had seen it, and told daddy. I thought the rooms in our hotel in Paris too lovely for anything, but this goes a long way ahead. I've got that splendid big front chamber with the dressing-room and bath, and the sort of little porch covered with vines, where the servants seem to expect me to have my breakfast by myself. The truth is, I don't care where I eat these old continental breakfasts; only rolls and coffee, and perhaps one miserable little egg, and that extra, I'm always hungry again by eleven. Daddy's got a huge room opposite mine, all carved furniture with a bed like a church pew, but he likes it, and the man nurse that takes care of him says he's better already for the change. It's ridiculous for only us two to try to fill this regular little palace, isn't it? If I were home, I could ask some of the girls, but, over here, I don't know any but one, and we haven't actually got a chaperon for me yet. We talked of it, you know, but when it came

to the point, daddy dreaded her being perched up between us like Poe's raven, at meals, and everywhere, and so we put it off. Perhaps, if you live here you wouldn't mind giving me a word of advice about how to do things. There's a housekeeper that goes with the house, and she engaged the extra servants, such a lot I never saw! I came out into the garden to get rid of the whole kit and boodle of them! But after a while I'll learn my way, and then not feel so awkward as I do now. Maybe you are thinking it strange why I don't know these things, but I've no mother, and no near relations but daddy, and till now we've lived in a very plain way, at home."

Lady Campstown's heart melted incontinently. The rapidity and scope of the girl's confidences were atoned for by her youth and the direct gaze of her childlike eyes, to say nothing of the beauty that had been sinking into the old lady's impressionable senses. Also, her ladyship was always genuinely interested in the details of a perilous illness; and those of the invalid's recent grave attack of pneumonia were received with not to say satisfaction, but something that nearly approached it. She gave the girl much sound

advice, and as they strayed together onward from point to point through the grounds, which Lady Campstown knew *con amore*, she found herself equipped with an astonishing relish for the situation so unexpectedly attained. When they were both quite out of breath with talking and walking, she furthermore accepted, graciously, an invitation to step indoors and rest. She had thought her new friend a tyro in social arts, but when they reached the top of the long, hot gleaming flight of white marble stairs, and stood together between the potted bamboos and pelargoniums in the vestibule, was pleased to have her step back with charming grace and execute a little curtsey, saying:

"I don't think you can know that my name is Pamela Winstanley, and I'd be very glad if you wouldn't mind telling me yours."

It is not, therefore, to be numbered among things incredible that soon after four o'clock that afternoon, when the sun like a ball of fire had dropped behind the blue barrier of the Esterels, leaving the world to darkness and a sudden glacial chill, Miss Winstanley, attended by one of her bran-new footmen carrying a

sheaf of rare roses, repaired, in her turn, through the little green doorway in the flowery wall dividing Villa Reine des Fées from Villa Julia. She was wrapped in a smart fur-lined cloak, and her mission was to take tea with Lady Campstown!

A trim maid ushered her into the long, low drawing-room with its hangings of sunflower yellow, its mirrors and consoles and twin Empire sofas, its square of dull red Turkey carpet in the centre of a slippery waste of parquetry, its brass-trimmed tables and chairs, bought with the house and never altered. But over all had been diffused a look of home that Villa Reine des Fées could not attain. There was a folding screen covered with miniatures, behind the couch whereon Lady Campstown sat crocheting in rosy wool one of the new *pélérines neigeuses;* there were flowers and books and a wide writing-table, with silver bound blotting book and silver fittings. A small table, covered with a web of white linen and lace that a Cardinal might have worn upon a day of festa, was spread for the tea to be brought in by and by; and Posey did not know that, to fit it to her guest's age and supposed tastes, Lady Campstown had

sent a special messenger to the rue d'Antibes for marrons glâcés and wondrous crystallized fruits!

A little fire of gnarled olive roots, pine cones, and eucalyptus boughs was blazing on the hearth. The girl, carrying her own flowers now, paused on the threshold with an exclamation of delight.

"Oh! how good, how sweet of you to let me come!" she cried, "and, please, would you think me very rude if I sat down on the rug and played with your Orange pussy?"

The tea over, the new friends talked with ever-increasing cordiality. Lady Campstown soon knew all there was to know of the girl's former modest position in life and her recent information by her father that she was expected to spend his large income as she pleased.

"He asked me, poor dear, not to hold back for anything in reason, but to find out all that we ought to have, and order it. And you'd better believe, Lady Campstown, that an American girl knows how to do that same! It seems he had a talk on our steamer, just before we landed, with a friend both he and

I trust in, and she told him it was his duty to live up to his fortune. He's known he had all this money for nearly a year past, but had no idea how to begin to spend it. And so we branched right out in Paris, and got a suite of rooms that a royalty had before us. I went straight off to the Only Adorable Worth, and bought everything in the way of gowns. I had masters in French and singing, and when we drove in the Bois, or went to the galleries and shops, and everybody stared, I took to it as naturally as a duck to water. But I must say it was lonesome. I longed and longed for somebody to tell how I felt about it all in my inmost heart. . . . Then, my darling old daddy fell ill, and his life was in danger, and all the grandeur fell flat as a pancake. I didn't care a straw for my clothes, my carriage, my fine maid, even my new pearls—the whirling wheel of life stood still, still, and I heard only my heart-beats! I thought I was going to lose the dearest, tenderest father in the world, and be left a poor wretched orphan with nothing but things to comfort me!"

She had sprung up from the rug and was by this time seated on the couch beside Lady Campstown, and that lady's kind little hand

had found its way into hers. If the dowager felt, at moments, a little dizzy with the speed at which this episode of new acquaintance had progressed, she had only to look across the room at the portrait of a girl who would have been thirty had she lived, but in her mother's eyes seemed forever just eighteen. Maybe she would have been ungrateful, unloving, *mondaine* or *dévote;* she might have married ill, or died in bringing a child into the world; or any one of a thousand every-day happenings might have robbed the mother of joy in her companionship. But, to Lady Campstown, her lost daughter was always young, prosperous, lovely, beyond reproach; and for her sake, Pamela Winstanley, with all her imperfections of bringing-up upon her golden head, was forgiven much! What wonder that before they separated Posey had received assurance that Lady Campstown would look after her in various substantial ways; and that Mr. Winstanley's new motor car, ordered from Paris, being yet to come, the girl should be invited to take her first view of the riant little town from the cushions of Lady Campstown's well-known old landau, with the quiet

black horses and sober coachman? When they had thus agreed to go shopping together in the tempting, if narrow and sunless, rue d'Antibes, and Posey, for the second time, had arisen to take her leave, her eye fell upon an imperial photograph, framed in silver, of a man she recognized with a swift leap of the heart.

"My nephew Clandonald," said the dowager, heaving a little affectionate sigh. "Almost all I have left to love. He is a dear fellow, and has been much sinned against. Just now he is somewhere in the Balkans loafing, as he calls it, with his friend M. de Mariol, but I trust he will come back soon, and that certain things I hope for him will become realities. I don't mind telling you, my dear, that there is a young lady in the case, and that she's a countrywoman of your own. I have met her, and love her already for his sake, but there's been mischief made, and it will take time to straighten out the tangle of my poor Clan's heart affairs, and, when you and I know each other better, I will explain. In the meantime, we won't talk of it. You'll be ready at half-past ten to-morrow, when I

call for you? I'll take you around to the right tradespeople, and afterwards we'll have a little turn on the Croisette."

"An American girl!" Posey said within herself. "It must be said he found consolation very soon." She was conscious of feeling rather blank.

CHAPTER VII

"When in doubt where to go, stay in Paris," had been for some years of travel Miss Bleecker's favorite saying. Helen, who had no great love for the place from her chaperon's point of view, simply acquiesced when told it was too early to go south. She begged Miss Bleecker to go on with her own routine. Mornings in the shops were followed by luncheons with old friends among the American residents, where, after luxurious eating and drinking of light wines, the women sat for hours rooted upon down couches, propped by silken cushions, exchanging hearsays of stupendous gossip about their common acquaintances. Upon Miss Bleecker's return from one of these intimate entertainments, Helen's views of human nature were lowered for days to come.

In the afternoon, Miss Bleecker generally drove out with her charge, or left cards upon people who would have resented her getting in as earnestly as she. In her smart wrap

and voluminous furs, with her plumed hat and dotted veil, the chaperon justly flattered herself that some of the glances bestowed upon their victoria in the Bois and along the Champs Elysées were a late plum fallen to her share. In Central Park, at home, and in Fifth Avenue, every one knew it was only the same old Sally Bleecker in a new French hat. Miss Bleecker had heard it suggested that one must come abroad to find a proper deference paid to years of maturity, which secretly was not what she desired. Her taste was neither for the cold-blooded pushing to the wall of her generation by young Americans, nor yet the reverent hand-kissing of the ancient, observable in high life abroad. Since her morals were above reproach, all she really asked was a recognition by the public of her successful illustrations of the methods of Paquin and Alphonsine.

There were always teas to drop in for, after the drives, at the cosmopolitan resorts of Ritz, or Columbin, or Rumpelmayer, or in private dwellings. In Paris, the division of time between five and seven in the afternoon has become as important for the achievement of social idling of both sexes as in London.

It is in New York where the tea-drinking habit is a graft among the men, and to the women an intermittent sacrifice to fashion's shrine. Miss Bleecker was of the sort whom the steam of the tea-kettle inebriates as well as cheers. She could better exist without her evening orisons than her cup of tea between four and five.

When the ladies returned to their hotel, there was barely time to dress for dinner or the play. Miss Bleecker's dinner list in Paris was larger than in New York, where Sally Bleecker was beginning to be *vieux jeu.* Abroad, she was welcomed by the translated Americans living in various capitals, who were sure of hearing from her the few things about the private lives of their friends at home that had not got into their newspapers. Lastly, but decidedly not least, she had had the wisdom to perfect herself in bridge, which Helen detested, in common with all games of cards. Whenever Miss Carstairs elected to go off with friends of her own to dine and pass the evening, and her young lady put on a tea gown and ordered a plate of soup and a wing of chicken in their own salon, the chaperon was in glory. In a black net dress, largely be-

spangled, with a dog-collar of excellently imitated pearls around the doubtful portion of her throat beneath the chin, with her hair admirably groomed and her nails perfectly manicured, wearing her best evening manner and longest gloves, old Sally would run down stairs nimbly to the fiacre that was to take her to her earthly Paradise of bridge! Or else in company with a playmate of seventy-two, who smoked cigarettes eternally, wore low scarlet gowns and rarely dined at home, she would go on from place to place, exhilarated beyond fatigue, whispering inwardly to herself there was nothing like this at her home across the sea.

Helen would have been wofully tired of this life had she not possessed the resources of a rational cultivated woman, and the ability to extract the real kernel of Parisian life, in addition to the acquaintance of a few clever people with whom she could fraternize in her own way. After all, as well Paris as elsewhere for the living down of a great clutching emotion such as her brief passion for John Glynn! She had been spared hearing Posey Winstanley talk about him as her possession, since the Winstanleys had quitted

Paris early in December, just before their own arrival there. She had heard in various ways how old Herbert had taken her advice literally, and enrolled himself among the money spenders of their liberal nation. With astonishing rapidity, the fame of the stunning young Southern beauty had been bruited abroad. It was related that a semi-royal personage who had seen her going up the staircase of her hotel had addressed to her father a proposal for her hand, which had been refused by the wise old gentleman without conveying the fact to his daughter. It was known that she had been "taken up" by the best people in Cannes. A little breeze of laudation concerning her was forever blowing where gossips congregate in *le monde où l'on s'amuse.* In two expressive words, Miss Winstanley "had arrived!"

Helen used to wonder most how this reacted upon John Glynn. She pictured his amazement at finding the Cinderella he had wooed had turned into a Princess in Glass Slippers. But as that is the sort of a shock to which most sensible men become easily habituated, she felt that he had, by now, probably ceased to wonder at his good luck. If he thought at

all of Helen, it would be with gratitude for having set him free for this.

She was not so certain that Posey had reached the same stage of satisfaction with existing bonds. Helen was too clever at reading character not to have seen more than Posey meant to admit about her feeling for Clandonald. She saw also that Clandonald was immensely taken by the girl, and believed that if Glynn were not in existence the Englishman would some day return to the charge. But she knew nothing of the anonymous letters, and their vile attacks upon Posey, which, long after silence had set in in the direction of the enemy, continued to burn and sting in their object's clean, sensitive soul. Since she had told Clandonald, Posey had spoken of this insult to no one. It made her feel, however, that she could never be quite the same again.

Helen had exchanged a letter or two with her, but the acquaintance had seemed to drift. It was Miss Carstairs' feeling that until Posey and Mr. Glynn were safely married, it would be more honorable of her to keep out of sight altogether; which goes to show that deep down in the bottom of her heart Miss Carstairs was

not altogether certain she had lost all hold upon her former lover's sensibilities.

One of the strangest experiences ever coming to Helen befell her at this time. It was nothing less than a declaration of his love in a letter, *en route,* from M. de Mariol. He had written to her intermittently since their parting in London charming airy missives in his best vein, his critics would have said; letters of rambling travel, of European politics, of observation; graceful, incisive, glowing with color, sparkling with happy phrases; the letters of a poet, a cultured eclectic of the twentieth century to his inspiration. But she had not imagined until she finished reading the last of the series it could come to his doing her the honor of asking her to be his wife. She was profoundly moved, more even than flattered. She had loved Glynn because he was young, handsome, unjaded, therefore broader than most of the men surrounded by whom she had grown up; because it had made her smile to be near him, and the touch of his stalwart hand had thrilled her with a thrill that sometimes came back now. Mariol, appealing to her intellectual side, to her sense of high companionship, repelled her as a lover,

and what he asked her to do seemed, on the face of it, grotesque. His suggestion that if she could be brought to look upon him favorably, he would return immediately to Paris, filled her with panic. Her letter sent in return was purposely gentle and simple and apparently unstudied, although nothing had ever cost her such epistolary birth-pangs.

M. de Mariol did not return to Paris, and in the course of some days Miss Bleecker also received an important letter, although not of a matrimonial cast. It was from Mrs. Carstairs, in New York, proposing an interposition of diplomacy between her stepdaughter and herself. Mrs. Carstairs, self-confessed a suffering angel who had borne in silence Helen's malignant opposition to her, was about to come abroad to spend the spring in yachting with her husband in the Mediterranean, and would be glad to have Miss Bleecker and Helen join them anywhere that was convenient. If Mr. Carstairs himself did not write to repeat this invitation, Helen would know it was because the poor dear was overworked and brain-weary. For that reason, if for none other, Helen should put aside her unjust, and injurious, and miss-

ish fancies, and become one of their family circle in the eyes of all the world.

("Naturally," said the astute chaperon to herself, "there is one of two reasons for this urgency to have Helen with them. Either some man she is flirting with is to make one of the party, or somebody has refused to receive Mrs. Carstairs until her step-daughter has done so first.")

If Helen would prove herself the devoted daughter she had always boasted of being, and subscribe to her father's wishes, Mrs. Carstairs was empowered by him to say that he would give her at once the fortune, independently of himself, that he had previously withheld. (Incidentally, she named a sum of which the magnitude made Miss Bleecker's frog-like eyes distend and her dull heart beat excitedly.) Helen would be free to come, to go, to marry as she pleased.

("And she'd be certain to do it, right away," interpolated the reader, "so I don't see where I come in at all.")

Helen would in fact be one of the most enviable young women in America. In conclusion, while urging upon Miss Bleecker the necessity of prompt and vigorous action in

this delicate matter, Mrs. Carstairs made an offer to her own account. To the chaperon, if successful in effecting the reconciliation, she would give, unknown to any one, a check for so many dollars, that, again, the frog-eyes opened widely, and Miss Bleecker slapped the letter upon her knee.

"The woman mayn't be well born, and she certainly deserves all Helen's done to her; but she's got brains, and I think she'll get there," said Miss Bleecker, in conclusion.

The beginning of February saw Miss Carstairs, her companion and the admirable Eulalie—who, of course, started the journey with a headache in order to justify her claim to be a first-class ladies' maid—leaving Paris in the Côte d'Azur Rapide, their destination the Riviera. So great was the exodus for that coveted spot that not only had the travellers been unable to secure for themselves places in the melancholy resort of a *dames seules* carriage, but the compartment in which they found cards bearing their names over the end seats was ominously placarded in all the other divisions. In vain Miss Bleecker fumed and fussed and put on her best grand

duchess manner; in vain Mlle. Eulalie looked like an early Christian martyr; the guard could give them no promise of better things.

After adjusting her many belongings in the racks and settling down with a look of grim resolution to bear all for Helen's sake, it occurred to Miss Bleecker to get up again and read the names of their yet absent fellow-passengers. Two of them were foreign, undistinguished, presenting nothing to her imagination, and as their owners took possession at the moment, the lady sat down in some confusion at being detected in her access of curiosity.

"If the other man comes, we'll be knee-to-knee all day, and there won't be breathing space," she whispered across to Helen, next whom, in the middle seat, the fair Eulalie was installed, leaving one place vacant near the door upon the corridor.

"If it's a man, so much the better," whispered Helen back. "Imagine another headache, beside Eulalie's."

"Oh! but I saw the name. English or American, 'Mr. John Glynn,'" returned the unknowing chaperon, who having cast her bombshell, opened a Paris *New York Herald*

and began to read the column of social movements in America.

Helen sat bolt upright, the blood tingling in her veins. Before she could recover from the first stupor of astonishment, the train was in motion, and, simultaneously, the guard hurried into his place the one person in the world whom Miss Carstairs had least dreamed of seeing.

She had shaken hands with him, and named him to Miss Bleecker, who wondered where Helen had picked up this surprisingly good-to-look-upon young man, before her heart ceased its wild palpitation, and she could fairly control her voice. He was direct from Cherbourg, it appeared, had crossed Paris in a slow fiacre, barely catching the Côte d'Azur, in which his place had been retained by wire, and was on his way to the Riviera in answer to a summons concerning important business for a friend resident there for the winter.

"I fancy I know your friend," said Helen, determined to let no grass grow under her feet. "I crossed with good old Mr. Winstanley in October, and he told me of your engagement to his daughter."

"Yes, that has been for some time an-

nounced," answered Glynn, the color deepening in his clear brown skin, while Helen remained quite pale. "You have heard also, perhaps, of Mr. Winstanley's bad break in health? Although better, he is not yet able to do business for himself, and a question came up in connection with the mines, in which it was necessary to have his verbal instructions; hence, my run over. Rather a jolly change for me from my office work. Since October, I have had my own place, you know, representing Mr. Winstanley's interests, with headquarters in New York."

"I congratulate you doubly, then," said Helen. "How very strange that you should have come into this carriage of all others. And how nice for you, getting out of the blizzards and the high-piled, dirty snow of New York streets in February, to have a glimpse of obstinately azure skies and acres of rose and jasmine!"

Although they were running smoothly, conversation across Mlle. Eulalie's large hands, in slightly soiled white kid gloves clasped over Helen's jewel case, did not progress in comfort. Miss Bleecker, who always wanted to be entertained, imperiously signed to the maid

to change places with Mr. Glynn, which was done, bringing him close to the ladies for a long day's run.

In New York, Miss Bleecker might not have looked twice at a man not in Mr. Charley Brownlow's set, and unknown at any of the clubs of which she considered membership to be the hall-mark of gentility. But those things settle down amazingly abroad, and she now saw Glynn with unclouded eyes. While Helen was wondering how Posey Winstanley could ever have turned aside to fancy Lord Clandonald, when she was free to marry this far handsomer, more imposing, young American, Miss Bleecker was subjecting Glynn to a rapid fire of questions about home matters, from the new Subway to the wrangles in City politics.

It was noticeable that when the chaperon now touched upon the subject of the Winstanley family, she did so in a key greatly altered from her former contemptuous one. A man who had risen in a night from commonplace obscurity to his present wealth and growing importance was a type of her country she could not conscientiously overlook. She recalled to Mr. Glynn that she

had thought his future father-in-law "so quaint yet forceful." She was not as enthusiastic over Mr. Glynn's fiancée, but there are limits to what we must expect of women.

Still, her active mind was even then springing ahead of the present. If she succeeded, as now seemed probable, in bringing about the reconciliation between Helen and her father's wife, and Helen consented to return to them for the present, obviously Miss Bleecker, although with a warm nest-egg in her pocket, would be, vulgarly speaking, out of a job. What better than to annex herself to the Winstanleys, to have the credit of forming a young creature who was destined to conspicuous place before the world and even, perhaps——?

Miss Bleecker, at this juncture, cast a furtive glance at her reflection in the little slip of mirror over Helen's head. It was not exactly favorable, since she had risen before the world was aired, her complexion looked yellow where it ought to be red, and certain fatal lines around nose and mouth, elusive in the evening, stood out, abnormally plain! Miss Bleecker looked away. By and by, hope springing eternal, whispered to her that what

a rich old man wants in a wife is not youth and beauty, provoking the eternal triangle of the modern situation, but agreeability, tact, a knowledge of how to make the wheels go round. She rallied, smiled at Mr. Glynn in the manner of a sweet old-time friend and counsellor, then taking out a French novel and a pearl-handled paper-cutter, subsided into apparent literature and actual plan-making.

Helen wondered if ever girl in her position were more curiously hounded by odd circumstance. She saw that Glynn, like herself, was profoundly moved by their rencontre. And what wonder, since when they had last met she had sobbed her farewell upon his breast, his arms had tightly closed around her, and he had declared that he could not, would not give her up!

He had been forced to give her up, however, and gradually to acquiesce in the common sense of her decision. The offer of himself to Miss Winstanley, made without knowledge of Posey's altered circumstances, had been joyously approved in a letter posted at Liverpool by Mr. Winstanley, who had bidden John remember that he was now his son, and, as such, entitled to a full share of the

good luck that he proceeded to unfold. When Glynn had assumed charge of Mr. Winstanley's interests and business, he had for the first time learned the full meaning and extent of that good luck! Mr. Winstanley also told him that under the circumstances of Posey's call to a much higher position in life and society than had even been expected, he desired her to spend some time longer in pursuance of education and wider experience before returning home to be married.

A little dazed by the turn of events, Glynn had acquiesced in this latter decree, almost too easily, he feared. He told himself that he needed time to adjust his ideas to the prospect of riches. As a matter of fact, he was relieved not to become Posey's husband until he knew her better. The pretty, half-baked, freakish creature, who offended his sense of conventionality, who dealt with him so unemotionally, seemed about as practical a bride as Undine must have been to her long-suffering knight! Between Posey's image and himself, that of high-bred Helen Carstairs, stepping down from her proud pedestal to give him the first passion of her woman's love, had, in the beginning, perpetually come. Latterly, this

had been wearing off, and stern habit had asserted itself, as it fortunately does.

Posey's letters, surely the strangest ever penned by a betrothed maiden to her lover, came to Glynn regularly. She had told him, with appalling frankness, that after engaging herself to him (by telephone!) she had suffered many pangs of fear that the whole thing was a mistake; also, she must confess, she had met another man with whom, had there been no obstructions in the way, she might have been happier. During her father's illness, seeing the enormous stress he laid upon her promise to marry John, she had come to see things more clearly, had recognized in herself a vain, silly child, and was now resolved to devote her whole future life to being more worthy of her good fortune as Glynn's wife.

To read these artless effusions had been like looking into a crystal globe. Whatever came, Glynn could not complain that she had deceived him. During his benefactor's dangerous illness, when it was essential for Glynn to remain where he was, and he could only cable his anxiety and sympathy, his heart had become more awakened to Posey's claim upon him, and he had felt for her loyal ten-

derness. When the summons from Mr. Winstanley arrived that was to bring him once more in actual touch with her, he had set out to obey it, believing that he was at last effectually cured of old weakness, and panoplied to begin the new life.

And he had hardly set foot in France before he found himself seated side by side with Helen Carstairs in a railway train, flying southward, with nothing to disturb their intercourse during a long day and evening, and actually bound for the same goal!

Simultaneously, Glynn and Helen rose to the occasion, put behind them the temptation to revert to the fond chapter lived in their young lives, and took up again the sort of intercourse that had so pleased and refreshed her at the beginning of their acquaintance. It was like one of their old talks at the house of Helen's friend who had introduced them to each other, and fostered their intimacy; a woman who had the cleverness to find interesting people in the whirlpool of business and pleasure and money-spending that calls itself New York society, and the courage to draw them out of it to herself.

Glynn felt that he would long have cause

to remember that February day. The new fast train justified all that had been claimed for it in speed and comfort. It tore down the Rhone valley as the mistral tears, it left behind Avignon, city of Popes, and other spots of classic interest, as if it had been a "Flyer" between Chicago and New York. The light carriages rocked and swayed, stones from the road-bed rose up like a fusillade of small-arms, striking the bottom of the train; one dared not leave one's seat for the dining-car for fear of falling; people who had not exchanged a word previously began, by common consent, to talk all together, and all their talk was of the speed of trains they had known and heard about. Miss Bleecker went yellow in her nervous anxiety, declaring she had no use for a train in which one could not brew a cup of tea for fear of setting things on fire. Mlle. Eulalie wept under her veil, and accepted brandy offered her from Miss Bleecker's flask. The two solemn travellers who filled the other seats, and now joined in general animated talk, turned out to be one a French railway engineer, to whose utterances all listened humbly, the other an Italian musical genius, *en route* for Monte Carlo. In

the confusion of tongues and exclamations, the little string of toy carriages bounced and flew onward, until suddenly the air brakes were put on, and with a long protracted jolting, they came to a full stop!

Something had happened, but what? Glynn and the engineer, going outside to investigate matters, in the falling dusk, returned to report that their carriage was to go no farther, and its passengers were to be transferred to the one ahead.

"As well as I can make out, it is the complaint not unknown to our railways of a 'hot box,'" said Glynn. "The bother is, that you ladies must take what seats you can get till our journey's end."

Officials, coming to hurry them, showed but scant sympathy with Miss Bleecker's indignant protests, with Eulalie's fresh burst of tears. Helen, following her chaperon quietly, had an odd sensation that nothing mattered much so long as Glynn was at her elbow speaking cheery, merry words!

They threaded their way into the carriage ahead, to be received with what enthusiasm by the tired, nervous, over-strained passengers already filling its full space, may be imagined.

Miss Bleecker was accommodated with the odd seat of a compartment reserved by a French couple of her acquaintance, who, feeling rather bored by so much of each other's society, made a virtue of necessity in welcoming the stranded American lady. Eulalie was tucked somewhere happily out of sight. For Helen and Glynn there remained but two camp-stools, produced by a guard, and placed in the corridor at the rear!

"I have heard of blessings in disguise," he said significantly, when they were speeding forward again toward Marseilles.

"This is really better than that stuffy place we had," she answered, made happy, despite herself, by the meaning in his tones.

"If any one had told me that I should be to-day sitting beside you, rushing through the darkness headlong to the unknown, I would have counted it a fable."

"You are not rushing to the unknown. I cannot think of any one whose life and work are more clearly cut out for him or more sure of a happy ending."

"I—I suppose so," he said, with a sigh.

"You know it, Mr. Glynn."

"Has it come to Mr. Glynn?"

"Don't make things worse for me than they are," she exclaimed confusedly. She felt frightened that one moment of isolation with him had brought back into his voice the lover's cadence, after their months of blank separation, and their day just passed in renunciation and good behavior. The admission in her speech, the forlorn droop of her mouth, were too much for his strained resolution.

"Tell me one thing only, Helen—as if we two were standing on the verge of everlasting parting—have you cared?"

"When have I not cared?" she said impetuously.

"*Had* it to be?"

"I thought so, then. I haven't always thought so since. Latterly——"

"Go on. Latterly—?" he said, in a dreary tone.

"I have made a compromise with my father about something in dispute between us. He has made me more than independent of him. Isn't it always so in life, that relief comes too late?"

"What did that ever matter, anyway? Wasn't I ready, willing, eager, mad, to take

you as you were? Would it have been the first time an American man married an American woman without a penny between them, except what he could earn? The trouble was that you couldn't trust me."

"That I couldn't trust myself," she said bitterly. "I knew my world better than you did, John."

"But you say you haven't always thought the same since," he exclaimed, searching her eyes with a desperately anxious gaze.

"It is not fair to wring from me such admissions. It isn't like you to persist in talk like this. After all, you were the first to console yourself."

His face fell into gloom. He drew away from her and, for a while, sat in silence. Helen turned to look out of the window to hide her gathering tears.

It was a miserable time for both, yet neither would have yielded up an inch of it in exchange for any imaginable pleasure. Helen was thinking, "Oh, that the train would only go on forever, and let me sit by him on this horrid little stool without a back!" and Glynn would have fought any guard or conductor who came to offer them the usual seats among

other people. They said very little, but felt the more. At Marseilles, where they went outside for a whiff of soft, delicious air, fancying they smelt orange blossoms, and saw stars looking into the sea, and during the rest of the zigzag run along the lovely coast to Cannes, each knew that the other was dreading the finale of their strange experience.

As they ran into the Cannes station toward eleven o'clock, and it became necessary to rouse up nodding Miss Bleecker, and collect woful Eulalie, with her bags and bundles, Helen and he rose simultaneously, with a shiver of apprehension.

"This is the last time, John?"

"The last time, Helen—*darling*," he said, in a hoarse undertone of yearning tenderness.

Their hands met and strained together. Her eyes answered his, and he did not again doubt.

"It has been all one great, terrible mistake," she went on, more steadily. "We have got to meet, if you stay here, and after this there's to be no more weakness, remember! We'll be pretty poor stuff if we can't conquer ourselves, don't you think so?"

Hers was the last word, for Miss Bleecker,

tottering like a somnambulist, issued forth to interrupt them. Helen and she were assisted out of the train by Glynn, and placed in custody of their hotel's station-porter. A moment more, the ladies were in the 'bus alone, threading the back streets of the sleepy little town, to ascend the hill to a stately hostelry, where their arrival was the signal for a theatrical effect of house-porters in scarlet jackets issuing from a brilliantly lighted entrance around which roses and bougainvillea twined.

"Really, Helen," observed Miss Bleecker, whose good-humor returned as she looked complacently around their pretty suite of rooms, where lights and flowers and a small fire of olive-wood combined to make the travellers forget their woes. "I must say they have done very well for us. I believe we shall be comfortable here until the yacht arrives. And how delightful it is to think you sent that cable, yesterday, consenting to join your dear father and his wife. When you lay your head on your pillow, every night after this, you will sleep more sweetly with the thought of having—why, child, you're white

as a ghost! I suppose you're a little train-sick, after the shaking-up we got. It was too bad your having to sit out on that wretched little camp-stool, but you seemed to get along well enough with Mr. Glynn, and there wasn't an inch left in Countess de Saint Eustache's compartment. Do you know, she told me the whole story, from beginning to end, of Kate Ravenel's unfortunate marriage with the Marquis de Contour. My dear, he is an absolute decadent! And to think how the Ravenels bought and paid for him in hard cash, and how wretchedly they were sold in the transaction! By the way, the Countess knows our friend, M. de Mariol, intimately, and says that for people to get him to their dinners or country houses is the greatest feather in their caps! He is *de tout*, she assures me, which, of course, makes one enjoy his writings so much more. I hope we shall certainly meet him again. Helen, speaking of young Glynn, if ever a man was born with a gold spoon in his mouth, it's he. To be marrying Mr. Winstanley's only child, and they having gone up like a house afire! The Countess says the Winstanleys have been floated here by Lady Campstown, and already

know everybody, and are much liked. It seems they have one of the most desirable villas, own a smart motor, the girl has no end of stunning gowns—you remember they showed us at Worth's the evening frocks they were sending down to her—and will soon be entertaining lavishly. The question is, where did Lady Campstown pick her up? We must call on both of them to-morrow. I am all anxiety to meet dear Lady Campstown again, and I confess I *am* anxious to get a peep inside Villa Reine des Fées."

"I fancy you will find Miss Winstanley changed in many respects, Miss Bleecker," said Helen, wearily. "But it seems to me hardly probable she has lost her high spirit in this little time. And she *may* remember your conduct to her on shipboard."

"Nonsense, my dear!" answered the chaperon, complacently. "As we live now, it is always easy and generally convenient to forget. The girl, for all her barbarisms, seemed to have a level head. She will be charmed to see us, and so will Lady Campstown, who had set her heart upon marrying you to that nephew of hers, Clandonald. If it were not for young Glynn, I should imagine that the

Lady Campstown had gone off on another tack in her heiress cruise. Looks like it, don't you think? If Miss Winstanley hasn't told her of her engagement to Glynn, there'll be a pretty row on presently. We'll call, at any rate. I am glad to hear Mr. Winstanley is no worse, and may be counted upon to recover permanently from this attack. I wonder if he likes being read aloud to, Helen? To show that I bear no ill-will to the girl for her pertness to me, I'd just as soon offer to sit with him, sometimes. I was always said to have great success with invalids. And we'd better be prompt in looking them up, for who knows whether this is really a business trip of Glynn's? I should be much inclined to think he has run over to look after his heiress, and see that she does not slip through his fingers, with all these fine people with titles hanging around her. Glynn looks like a positive, if not self-willed, fellow, Helen. Indeed, I shouldn't in the least wonder if the business pretext is a blind, and *M. le fiancé* won't go back to America without his bride. In that case, we shall have a smart wedding at Cannes, and poor Mr. Winstanley will be left all to himself at Villa Reine des Fées.

They say there is nothing like that entrance hall and staircase in the town, all marbles of the rarest and most beautiful colors; and the dining-room, with its wall tapestries and screens, is fit for a palace. Poor Mr. Winstanley! There is nothing so sad in life as a person of—well, middle age—left alone by young people for whom he has done everything. There should be some congenial and sympathetic soul to—poor Mr. Winstanley!"

CHAPTER VIII

"Come a little way down this walk, John," Posey said, the morning after her lover's arrival, while engaged in showing him the place, "and you will see exactly where the woman was sitting yesterday, when she got up and spoke to me in that dreadful way. I never dare tell my father, and it would worry dear Lady Campstown out of her wits to think any suspicious outsider had been seen lurking about the grounds. I rather fancied this person was out of her head, and so, when she vanished abruptly, I just told the gardener that a doubtful-looking stranger had been in the garden, and his men must be on the watch to see that it doesn't occur again."

"Quite right," said Glynn. "I dare say you won't hear of her any more. What sort of a lunatic was she? Young or old, smart or shabby, English-speaking or foreign?"

"Oh! English decidedly, with one of their lovely low voices, from the throat. A lady, I suppose, one would call her, but shabby and

deadly pale with glittering brown eyes, and lips with no color. I should think she took morphine, or some of those horrid things. Her clothes had been handsome once, but were put on in a slovenly way."

"Probably some poor soul here for her health, who had escaped from her caretakers. Certainly, you can have no enemies, my dear girl?"

"I didn't think so," answered Posey, flushing, "until I received a number of anonymous letters on shipboard, and several afterward. Then they stopped suddenly."

"Do you mind telling me their drift?"

Posey's cheeks became crimson, but she looked him bravely in the face.

"They were all full of lying things against me and the man I told you I met at sea—and have never seen or heard from since."

"Thank you, dear," said Glynn, simply. "We have both need of consideration for each other, and I trust you thoroughly. But this gives me an idea. You say the morphine lady told you she had a favor to ask of you——"

"Yes, but before she could get further, the gardener's man came in sight, and she

took flight. She said that I was luckier than she, since I could buy my peace, and she'd advise me not to hold back now when I'd a chance to do so."

"That's blackmail, not insanity. The woman has probably spent her last sou at Monte Carlo, and reading about you in the papers, thinks you're a good object to attack for funds."

"It's no use, John. I can't tell half a thing, to save my life," exclaimed the girl, desperately. "At the moment she ran down that alley of laurustinus, she called back, 'You can't expect your friend, Lord Clandonald to pay all, and you nothing, to shut mouths.'"

Glynn walked beside her in moody silence. The matter was worse than he had feared. To find Posey in the toils of an obnoxious scheme for torment and money-getting, was more than annoying. He justly considered that it was paying too high for her successes, her magnificent establishment in life. For the moment it blotted out the blue of sky and blurred the exquisite beauty of their surroundings.

He had, like everybody else, heard of Clan-

donald and his matrimonial infelicities, his divorce, and his visit to the States. A strong resentment took possession of the young American at the idea that this Briton, battered by foul tongues and associations, should be the one who, even for a moment, had won Posey's allegiance away from himself.

"You are angry. I knew you would be," she burst out finally. "I at first thought of telling Lady Campstown, and asking her advice. But Lord Clandonald is her nephew, almost her son, and I was ashamed. She has not the faintest idea there was ever anything between us."

"Between you? What can you mean?" wrathfully demanded Glynn, whose merit was never that of tolerance.

"I don't know myself. It was all so sudden, and passed so quickly. He used to come and talk and walk with me upon the ship. I began by being sorry for him, because his life had been so spoiled. He never said a word of flattery or silly talk like the others. He seemed to me a man."

"Well, go on, please," said Glynn, curtly.

"One evening when that old wretch Mr. Vereker tried to kiss me out on deck——"

"What!" thundered Glynn, his brows meeting, his eyes darting ire upon her.

"He didn't do it, John; just missed the tip of my ear, and I hit him in the face. I ran away to Miss Carstairs and Lord Clandonald, and told them, or rather didn't tell them—they understood. Clandonald looked just as you do now, and put himself in front of me, and I was so glad to be protected, when all the ship was saying mean, spiteful things of me, that for a little while I thought I must be in love with Lord Clandonald——"

"This alone is worth crossing the ocean to hear," commented Glynn with bitter sarcasm.

"Well, you know I told you of it at the time. It was a perfectly hopeless thing, anyhow. Even if you hadn't been there, I couldn't marry a divorced man whose wife is living. It's just one of those fashionable habits that doesn't happen to appeal to me."

"Posey, you are unconquerable," he said, a gleam of amusement coming into his eyes.

"You might as well hear all the rest. After I had those nasty letters, I kept away from him and got daddy to give up London, because I'd promised we would go down to

lunch at Beaumanoir, his home. It was my first and last chance at an English ancestral mansion, I reckon. The last night aboard, when we were at anchor near Liverpool, in a fog, daddy and I met him, by accident, on deck. Dear old dad, who can't be made to suspect anybody, would run off after his letter of credit, that he'd packed in a steamer coat and almost sent ashore. I was left with Lord Clandonald. I tell you, John, you couldn't have treated me better than he did then. There was one little minute when I was scared, though. He was furious when I told him of the anonymous letters. He said there was only one who could have done it, but how, in God's name, did she get upon that ship? And then he asked me to let him stand between me and all such people always——"

"You let him ask you that?"

"John, you know when a man and a girl are together things get said that they never dreamed of saying. I knew like a shot I ought to have told Clandonald about you before. But how could I introduce the subject in cold blood——"

"I am afraid it was cold blood," interpolated John ruefully.

"Well, you couldn't expect me to thrill and tremble, and all those things they do in novels, when I'd said yes in a telephone booth, and never seen you after. I tried to, John. Honestly, I did, but it wasn't the least use."

Glynn would have been more than mortal not to laugh at her look of humble apology.

"Ah! well, Posey dear, I'll not be hard on you. But tell me, please, what further passed between you and Lord Clandonald?"

"Absolutely nothing. All I could do was to turn the conversation away from him and me. I couldn't find the least little way to bring you into it, or to say, 'Unhand me, sir, my heart and faith are another's,' since his hands were in his pockets and mine in my muff, and we were both saturated with Channel fog. I just thanked him for all his kindness to me on the voyage, and told him what's true, that I'd never forget it; though, if he ever met me again I'd probably be a very different sort of Posey Winstanley. And then he calmed down, and it was all over forever, and I ran away to see if daddy had found

his letter of credit—and—and—I've never seen or heard from Clandonald since."

"Posey, you are a child still, a charming child, and I love you for it, dear."

"It's awfully good of you, John, and the greatest possible relief. If you knew what a double-faced sort of thing I've felt myself to be all these months, remembering that I'd let another man almost propose to me, when I had given you my word of honor—there's one thing I'd like to ask before we've done with the subject, though. What does it mean when a person is by you and you'd give, oh! *anything* if they wouldn't go away?"

John started genuinely. A vision flashed to him of those blessed maddening hours in the train the day before, when Helen and he had sat together, and he jealously begrudged every revolution of the iron wheels that, without mercy, carried them toward their parting.

'I don't know, Posey," he murmured guiltily. "Why in the world do you ask me that?"

"Because I thought you would tell me, honestly," said she, with a speculative expression. "It has bothered me often, wondering. But it doesn't matter. Now you are here, everything seems straight and clear be-

fore me. Shall I ever forget daddy's rapturous old face when he sat by your supper-tray at the library table, last night, forcing you to eat indigestible food, and looking from one to the other of us?"

"But he has aged, dear," said Glynn, with a twinge of pain. "One sees the spirit in his face above the flesh. We must never let him know care or trouble again, little girl. We must strengthen his arms, one on either side of him, and make him walk easily through life."

"How beautifully you talk, John!" cried she. "Ah! No Englishman could ever have felt that way toward my daddy. No other man could give him what you do. Yes, you are right. It's our life-work to put him between us, and look out for him every day."

"And to do so," went on Glynn resolutely, "we should marry soon."

Posey started visibly.

"Must we, John? Oh! I hadn't thought of that."

"Is the idea a pain to you?"

"Perhaps. I don't know. I've always put it out of my mind when it weighed on me. Daddy gave me a year, John," she added

pleadingly. "And the year began in October. This is only February. We're all so happy as we are."

Happy! Again that clutch of iron upon Glynn's heartstrings!

"Happiness will come more fully and freely, my sweetheart," he said, striving for words, "when we have put his heart's desire beyond all chance. I think you will both have to come back with me to America this Spring, if I'm to serve his interests as I should. Let me take my wife with me, Posey."

"What, *now?*" she cried, with wide-open, panic-stricken eyes. "Oh! goodness gracious, I hope not now!"

"I am due again in New York almost immediately, but will be free to return the beginning of next month, or a little later. By that time the heat will be sending you away from the Riviera, and would it not be best for us to be married very quietly here, and let Mr. Winstanley's son and daughter take care of him upon the voyage?"

"A wedding here? What a funny idea!" cried Posey. "Not a girl I know to ask as bridesmaid—at least, the only one I'd want would be Helen Carstairs, who has just arrived

in Cannes, and I don't know about her. Perhaps she mightn't wish; but she was *too dear* to me, John, on shipboard, as I wrote you. By the way, you didn't seem to take the least interest in my friendship with Helen, and yet it has done me a world of good. Not a girly-girly affair in the least, I assure you. We'd both have scorned that. She has written to me several times, and I was simply wild with pleasure to hear she was coming down to Cannes. I think if you'd realized what Helen is, John, at least what she is to me, you'd not have been so indifferent. I must tell you the truth, I was really quite hurt with you. But you'll meet here, and then you'll see for yourself, and end by adoring her as I do—oh, John," she exclaimed, interrupting her light chatter with an exclamation of terror, "there's that woman now!"

"What woman, Posey?" he asked, bewildered at her rapid change of subject.

"Hush! The one I told you of, who frightened me yesterday—the mad woman. Don't turn suddenly, but, after a second, look between those two lemon trees. She just glided past as we were speaking, down the walk from Villa Julia, and is hiding behind the shrub-

bery. She's waiting for me, John. This is getting terrible!"

"She shall have *me,*" said Glynn grimly, his senses alert in a moment to the danger Posey ran.

"Don't make a scene with her—don't alarm daddy," she went on.

"Trust me," he answered briefly. "Do you go into the house, and stay there till I come. Say nothing to any one, and I'll rid you of your nightmare."

As Posey mutely obeyed him, albeit with a blanched face, Clandonald's saying came into Glynn's mind, "There's but one woman who would do this thing." Verily, Glynn would not have to go far to find her.

She arose from her bench as he approached —evidently badly scared. A man of his years and vigor and mastery of the situation had not entered into her calculations of this experience.

"You look surprised at seeing me here," she said rapidly, with perfectly well-bred ease. "I suppose it *is* trespass, but the villa had been so long unoccupied, we had got into the way of running into the garden from my

aunt, Lady Campstown's, whose house is across the lane yonder."

He was for a moment thrown off his guard and bowed, acquiescing, as any gentleman would have done.

"However, I am just going," she added. "The little green door is very familiar to me, I assure you."

"Might I delay you one moment," he said courteously, "to ask what can be your motive in annoying and threatening the young lady of this house? I ask in her father's name, and we wish you to know that this must be absolutely the last time that you come into these grounds."

"What difference does it make?" she asked fretfully, throwing out her hands with a weary gesture and losing her self-control. "I can always reach her, somehow. She has not done with me yet, I can tell her. Unless," she added, with a low, meaning laugh, "her friends are ready to make it well worth my while to disappear."

"You will not find her friends unwilling to aid in that desirable result. But I have first to know your motive in annoying her so cruelly."

"Call it rivalry, call it revenge," she said, with a shrug. "Either one of these causes is strong enough. She is, if you must know, the only woman I ever feared could take my place in my late husband's life—permanently, I mean," she added, with an ugly smile.

"I take it that I am speaking to Lord Clandonald's divorced wife?"

"Really, my good sir, you give yourself, or rather Miss Winstanley, 'away,' as they say in the vernacular of your richly-gifted country. You are evidently well-informed of the progress of that immaculate young lady's affair with Clandonald—continued on shipboard doubtless from America, and who knows when and where since?"

"The young lady, whose name I forbid you to mention here," cried Glynn, with a darkened countenance, "met the gentleman in question on shipboard for the first time, as she did twenty others, and has never seen or communicated with him since."

"She has convinced you of that fact—then rumor is right for once, and there *is* a confiding fiancé from America? After all, yours is a younger civilization than ours, and you still believe in your girls?"

Glynn interrupted her. He had got all he wanted from Ruby Darien.

She had been a striking beauty, had, even now, a certain reckless grace of manner. Her face was as Posey had described it. He read there untruth, degradation of moral fibre, and the ravage of disease and drugs. There was no use in dealing with her in heroics. Money would buy her, and money she should have.

"If Miss Winstanley's friends agree to make it worth your while—substantially worth your while" (her eyes glittered) "to keep at a distance from her, never again to approach her in deed or speech, at the risk of forfeiting a monthly allowance of say—" (here he mentioned a sum which caused Ruby Darien's haggard face to flush high with covetous delight)—"it will certainly not be without an understanding on their part of how you contrived to present yourself through Lady Campstown's premises without identification by her servants."

"That was a small matter," she said eagerly. "Although my respected aunt-in-law has long since instructed her staff not to admit me to her presence, there remains

in her employ a child of nature, an untutored Provençal housemaid, who in former days chose to idealize me, and even now would do anything reasonably atrocious at my bidding. She it was who contrived to let me in from the lane, to which a cab from the station brought me up the hill. I should tell you that I am stopping temporarily at Nice, in an hotel where they accept me without questions, but which has proved, alas, too fatally convenient to Monte Carlo!"

"Then, if you will allow me, I will myself see you into another cab for your return. There is a station for carriages at no great distance down the road from here. To-morrow I will present myself at your hotel in Nice, with the necessary papers insuring to you the allowance I named, and an agreement, which I shall in return ask you to sign, pledging yourself to keep your side of the bargain."

"American promptitude in business is proverbial," she said, essaying an easy laugh, and darting a side glance, not unmixed with admiration, upon her interlocutor. "How nice it must be to be disgustingly rich as all you Yankees are; to be able to confound the

politics and frustrate the knavish tricks of your enemies by the prompt administration of hard cash! I always thought that if I'd had money enough to be good on, I might have graduated as a saint."

When Glynn walked up the steps at Reine des Fées, feeling a mixture of disgust and pride in his victory achieved, Posey ran out to meet him, slipping her arm in his.

"You've triumphed, I see. Oh! John, dear, what daddy needs is a real son like you, and I, just such a brother. Don't tell me anything about that horrid creature now, let's be happy for a while. Let us speak of something as far from her as one pole of earth is from the other—of dear Helen Carstairs, whose card I found on the hall table when I went in after leaving you. If it hadn't been that I was with you, I'd have begrudged missing her for anybody's sake. Of course the stupid servants said I was not at home. Now, why couldn't they have shown her into the garden, and then she could have been introduced to you, and how nice that would have been! The two people of all others I most admire, and shall expect and

insist upon being friends with each other! Say, John, to please me that you are longing to meet Helen!"

"Posey," began Glynn, and his voice to his own ears sounded unnaturally thin, "I have been waiting a chance to tell you that I *have* known Miss Carstairs; that I ran upon her by chance at the Gare de Lyons yesterday, just as the train for the South had started. That we were, in fact, companions in the same compartment, and talked of you together, more than once, during our day's run."

"You! Helen! Wonders will never cease!" cried the girl exultingly. "But," a sobering thought seizing hold of her, "how was it possible you never mentioned her to me in a single one of your letters?"

"Try to think why, Posey," the young man said gravely, as they paused together in the hall filled with dead marbles and living blossoms of the Spring.

"It was Helen, then, Helen?" Her eyes flamed the rest of the sentence.

"Yes."

"Ah! I might have guessed it. And I —was vain enough and rash enough to think

I could fill her place to you. Poor, dear John, what you have lost, and what have you got instead?"

"Far more than I merit in any case, dear. It is her secret, and, but that I dared not deceive you, should never have passed my lips. It is over, Posey, buried forty fathoms deep. You see, now, that each of us has need of charity and forbearance with the other, and you must set me an example of kind forgivingness for all I have done or left undone toward you."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Winstanley, who, at this moment, came shuffling out from the library to join them, "you are late for luncheon, but how long wouldn't I wait to see you and Posey standing there together? It's better than any sun-bath to have you around, I tell you! I feel years younger since you came."

"So do I, father," said Posey. "After this I am going to wear a collar with a little bell and a leash, and let John lead me upon the Croisette. It is good to have some one to be will and conscience, both, for me!"

"I'm afraid I've spoiled her for you, just a little, John," added her father wistfully.

"You and others, perhaps. But such as she is, she's a lot too good for me, sir—or any man. All the same, I think you'll have to be giving me Posey before the time you fixed for our probation. We are young and will grow together, and she'll help me to do big work. And it seems to me, Mr. Winstanley, that she's got a dose of this Old World at the start that'll make her willing to settle down in our own country."

"We'll see," nodded the old gentleman. And, indeed, the idea of an earlier marriage chimed in with his own notions. Since the wing of the Angel of Death had brushed so near his face in passing, Herbert Winstanley often thought that to put the future of his impetuous child into safe hands would give him a happier feeling when he lay down to sleep o' nights.

Thus Miss Bleecker was wiser than she knew, in predicting a matrimonial conclusion to the Winstanley winter in Cannes. When she and Helen accepted Posey's invitation to dine with them "to meet a few friends" on the night but one following their arrival—an invitation, needless to say, ac-

cepted by Miss Carstairs with perturbation of spirit and the feeling that she was walking up to the cannon's mouth—things seemed to point that way. They found Mr. Winstanley, simple and gentle as ever, standing to receive his guests in the drawing-room with its famous tapestries, surrounded by gems of art that for the first time in years had emerged from their Holland cerements. The stately room had flowers massed in its corners, and a great fire of logs was leaping under a carved stone mantelpiece also banked high with plants and blossoms. At her father's right hand stood Posey, blushing and dimpling with artless pleasure in receiving her friend under circumstances so radically different from those in which they had met and parted a few months before; but in dress and bearing so perfectly adapted was she to her luxurious entourage, that Miss Bleecker blinked when looking upon her, and refused to believe her eyes. And on Mr. Winstanley's other side, quiet, grave, a little pale, but collected and fully determined to maintain his position with dignified acceptance, stood Glynn—as handsome and bonny a lad as ever rejoiced a father's heart, Mr. Winstanley

was saying inside his own warm receptacle of human emotions.

As Helen's eyes met John's and dropped away; as he clasped her gloved fingers, marvelling at her grace and distinction in the trailing dinner gown of pale rose satin without frill or furbelow, each felt that this occasion had for them the solemn significance of a final renunciation of their love. It was as if she were standing in the church seeing Glynn take Posey to be his wife. A keen pang of shame for the weakness that had overcome her on their journey shot through her being. Ah, well! Fate had been too strong for her then. That was the last, the very last—like a farewell breathed into already deadened ears.

Posey's attitude toward Helen also touched Miss Carstairs acutely. That there was in it a new consciousness she felt immediately. She recognized that Glynn must have eased his honest heart of its burden by telling his betrothed of his former love for her, and felt that this was as it should be, if Posey were to remain her friend. It was not tender apology, or loving sympathy, that Posey showed, nor yet bashful consciousness that

she had in some way taken the ground from under Helen's feet, but an exquisite mixture of all these. Her high spirits had for the moment deserted her. She kept close to her father's side, answered Miss Bleecker's fulsome greetings with no attempt at tart or witty answers, and, as their other guests came in, proceeded to do the honors as if "born to the purple" (so Miss Bleecker whispered to John Glynn).

The chaperon's day of wonder was upon her, while the room rapidly filled with a company of people distinguished in the world's eye of their winter colony, all of whom bore themselves toward the tenant of Reine des Fées and his youthful *châtelaine* with the friendly consideration of accustomed intimates. To each of the new-comers, Glynn was presented by his host; without special announcement, it is true, yet in fashion so intentional that there was no mistaking the attitude in which he stood toward father and daughter. As they presently went in to dinner, in a salle with carved panels of French walnut and great lustres of Venetian glass illuminating its four corners, to gather around a table that left nothing for fastidi-

ous taste to criticise, Miss Bleecker wanted to pinch herself upon taking off her gloves, to feel assured that she was not in a dream. The old gentleman, yonder, well turned out by a good valet, in appropriate evening clothes, seated between a great lady of France, whose neck was wrapped in historic pearls, and an Englishwoman of rank and exclusive habit, could he be the little old man of shipboard, whom Helen's chaperon had despised and derided as the veriest pretender to good society? It was incredible! And the strangest part of the situation in old Sally's eyes was that, save in externals, Herbert Winstanley had not altered in any particular from the shrewd quiet observer of the game of life, the mild commentator upon the ways of men and women, the almost childlike recipient of courtesy and kind words, whom she remembered with amused contempt.

Such as he was, these people had taken him up with a good-will there was no denying. Miss Bleecker had the pleasure of finding herself at table told off to an old beau of nativity American, overlaid with years of veneer Continental, who seemed to find satisfaction in extolling to her the "solid" success

of the Winstanleys; the girl's extraordinary ease in presiding over this banquet of state, and the good luck of that fellow Glynn, whose significant appearance this evening was evidently intended to put all of Miss Winstanley's other admirers out of the running.

Old Sally, who had long ago learned how to trim her sails, listened with bitterness, and while comforting her inner woman with the long succession of "plats" and wines presented at her elbow, made up her mind that she would stray over to Reine des Fées, without Helen, next morning (under her most becoming parasol), with the hope of finding Mr. Winstanley engaged in taking his sun-bath on the terrace. "And, if I only get my chance," she meditated, "trust me for following it up." The announcement, by cable from America that day, of the engagement of a contemporary of her own, long abandoned in appearance to celibate joys, to marry "the last man anyone would have expected to see pick her up"—a recent widower of large means and uncertain temper—accelerated the spinster's thoughts and lent a false brilliancy to the evening that had begun for her so dolefully.

To Helen Carstairs, naturally, the ordeal of

the dinner was interminable. Separated from Glynn by a wide extent of flower-decorated table, amid which candles gleamed softly, and silver lent its sheen to illuminate beds of maiden-hair and cyclamen, she dared not look in his direction. All of her efforts were given to self-control. The man who took her in, a handsome blond young Russian, with all the languages of earth seemingly at his disposal, decided that the American heiress not appropriated at this feast was as cold as the snows of his own Caucasus. The Roumanian prince on her other side gave her up also as a person impossible to interest. She went through it like an automaton, her one desire to see Posey signal to the lady with the pearls that it was time to arise from table.

Lady Campstown, watching this little drama of every day, felt worried and puzzled. She had never given up the idea that Clandonald had cared for Miss Carstairs, and was only debarred from telling her so from his pride of poverty and the clog attached to his career. Although her ladyship's secret heart yearned over Posey, and she would have given worlds to see Clan's allegiance transferred to her, the American rival well disposed of in some other

way (nature not settled in her mind) and Posey becoming a member of their family, her very own to cherish through life, the joyous regenerator of her nephew's hopes and fortunes—she now felt this to be a fairy tale beyond chance of reality. Much as she had talked to Posey about Clan that winter (and one must have experience of the wealth of conversation a lonely old woman lavishes upon the young, strong, vigorous manhood that belongs to her and has gone out to the world, forsaking her, to know just how much that was), the girl had never in return given her a hint of interest in him beyond the common. She had spoken of their meeting on shipboard, had acceded to Lady Campstown's appeals for interest in the chief events of his life, but had ventured nothing on her own account.

Slowly, but surely, therefore, Lady Campstown had seen the evanishment of this hope, conceived in secret and brought forth in fear, without a suggestion of it having been consigned to Miss Winstanley. The arrival of Mr. Glynn, duly presented to her ladyship in form, had shown the dowager the futility of her hopes. The engagement with Glynn was real, tangible, not a boy-and-girl fancy that might

drift into smoke—it was undeniably "there to stay."

Lady Campstown, perhaps unwillingly, could not withhold from Glynn the tribute of admiration his manly exterior, his fearless earnestness of character, were wont to extort from strangers. She had failed, though, to discern in Posey any of the usual signs and tokens by which a girl takes the world into her confidence concerning her joy at a lover's coming. She marvelled at the child's matter-of-fact demeanor, her off-hand bonhommie, her warm spirit of comradeship to Glynn. It must be, thought the old lady, a little put out by these conditions, which were not according to her recollections or her views, "that is the way they do it in America!"

Thus, perforce falling back upon the Helen Carstairs idea again, that young lady's arrival in Cannes had seemed little short of Providential. Clandonald must, according to his promises and forecasts of travel, be shortly in the field. There was no question that he had once admitted to his aunt it was some American lady who had caused the trouble from Ruby shortly after his return to Beaumanoir. He had been vague, elusive, as men always are in

telling what their womenkind want to know about other women; but there had been a girl, an American girl; Ruby had attacked him through this girl, he had paid dearly to silence the base tormentor, and then, in an access of wounded pride and disgust, had again shaken the dust of his native land from his feet, and journeyed into the unknown. Months had passed, long enough for Clandonald's angry feelings to subside. He must soon come back to Villa Julia, where he had known so many happy hours. His aunt would make him thoroughly comfortable, happy, as she well knew how to do. She would go slowly, leaving Helen and himself to drift together again in the natural order of such things. It must, it must come out all right!

While indulging in this optimistic thought for the twentieth time in two days, Lady Campstown had happened to catch a glimpse of Helen's face between two candelabra. It was the first time she had seen it in repose since the young lady's visit to Beaumanoir, and she was struck with an increase of thought and pain in the rare, fine countenance. At once she decided that Helen was fretting after Clan, and her warm heart bounded with sym-

pathy. She went up to Miss Carstairs when the women were together after dinner and spoke to her cordially, flatteringly. Posey, from where she sat with her two greatest ladies—tarrying there, however, just long enough to say a few modest words, then leaving them to what they desired, conversation with each other—saw the talk between her two friends, and longed to join in it. Hastening upon her rounds as a hostess, she in due time came up with them.

"What a nice time you two dear souls are having!" she exclaimed. "And how I've wanted to be with you! It is so much nicer always to be with the few one loves than with the many one merely has to know."

"You have been gleaning golden opinions, all the same," said Helen. "Lady Campstown has been telling me what Princess Z—— says of you as an entertainer—that you were born, not made."

"I reckon—no, I *fancy* I came by it honestly," laughed Posey. "I always enjoy the things we give so much more than those we go to."

"I am asking Miss Carstairs to come to me to-morrow for luncheon," said Lady Camps-

town, putting with loving fingers a stray bit of Posey's lace in place. "And I do hope, dear, you haven't promised anybody else."

"I'll come, surely," exclaimed the girl. "Though I suppose I ought not to forsake daddy and John these few days we have together. But to tell you the mortifying truth, they are continually falling knee-deep into talks of which I can't understand a thing. And sometimes I slip out with my dogs, and they don't even know that I have gone."

"'Slip out' to-morrow, then, at 1.30, and bring the dogs," said Lady Campstown. "But, my dear, what does this mean that I hear, Mr. Glynn is for leaving us on Thursday?"

"He's going to catch the 'Kronprinz' at Cherbourg, Saturday, and must have a few hours in Paris. It's awfully stupid, I tell him, but when an American man gets hold of a scheme that spells business you can no more induce him to loose hold of it than my darling Maida will consent to give up a particular pet bone."

"But he's coming back very soon, they tell me. How you Americans can go racing back and forth across the Atlantic as you do——"

"Yes, he's coming back very soon," said Posey, faltering a little, and pulling to pieces a superb white rose with purple-red outside petals that hung from a vase on the console next to her. "I may as well tell you both, what I meant to do to-morrow, that daddy and he decided to-day the wedding's to come off at the end of March. John will accordingly rush through a lot of things in New York, tear back again, probably *via* Genoa, if they put on one of the fast ships, and where his trousseau's to come in, I can't imagine. My own will take every minute from now till then, and all of the missionary aid you two dears choose to lend me, to make it an accomplished fact."

"You can count upon me in all things," Helen said very quietly.

"Oh, my dear lamb, and you ask me to be glad when it means that I've got to lose you," put in Lady Campstown, thinking for the moment honestly about herself, and thereby covering what might have been a trying pause to both girls. A servant, presenting a tray of coffee-cups at Lady Campstown's side, helped further to bridge the moment, and others of Posey's guests surrounding her with chat and

laughter, the question of the marriage floated away into space. Helen, however, took it back to her hotel with her, wrestled with it during sleepless hours, and next day, to stave off intolerable thought, set out for a long walk alone.

Whither she went she neither cared nor knew. She had a vague remembrance of having passed through the flower-market, and being set upon to buy, by a soft-voiced, smiling woman who stood behind great blurs of red and yellow and white and purple, shrined in verdure, from which luscious scent arose. To get rid of her, she had paid a persistent child a franc for a big bunch of violets, and the girl, with a saucy, merry face, thrust into her hand also a spray of orange blossom. Helen threw this last away impatiently. Impossible to be rid of the suggestions of that wedding, tenfold more abhorrent to her now that she had seen for herself and knew beyond a peradventure that it was inspired by no such love as she and John had felt for each other only a day or two before; such love as she must feel for him, God help her, till she died.

She walked on through the town, far into the outskirts, till seeing a sign of "New Milk" upon a châlet near the road made her suddenly

remember she had set out without even her morning coffee. Going inside the building, she sat for a few moments at a table while a woman served her with rolls and a glass of milk, and then, starting forth again, was vaguely tempted to ascend a hillside which rose abruptly above the spot, crowned with a noble growth of trees.

Helen had no sooner gained the smooth plateau of the summit than she remembered where she was. Long ago, as a child, in charge of her English governess, journeying from the Italian seashore to join her father at Marseilles, they had stopped over for a midsummer fête at Mont St. Cassien, where, in blazing heat, the Cannois and their rustic neighbors from miles around had fulfilled an old custom of Provence in holding service at a little chapel on this hill, the remainder of the day and evening being spent in feasting at tables spread on the slopes and in the green valley below. She could shut her eyes and see again the lights gleaming around the tables, as the hot darkness fell, the gay costumes, and the chain of dancers threading its way among the trees.

The grass was growing wild and coarse where she followed a shaded path to the little

hut in which a holy hermit had once lived and died. A peasant woman in the kitchen of the hermitage was cooking something in a casserole over a tiny fire, but she left it civilly to conduct the stranger through to the chapel adjoining. A girl grown to woman's height, but, alas, a child in intellect, began pulling and tugging at her mother's gown, asking witless questions and being repeatedly, but tenderly, thrust aside by the woman, and told to stay in her own place.

Helen hardly knew why she had acceded to the woman's suggestion that she should visit the uninteresting sanctuary, with its cheap emblems and smell of stale incense, and decorations of paper flowers.

But she understood, when through the now opened front door a gentleman stepped from broad sunshine into the chill interior, apparently as aimless as herself, and came up to her side.

"Helen! You are alone?"

"You here!" she answered under her breath. "When I have come all this distance to be away from you!"

"It is the same with me, Helen," Glynn said in a sombre voice. "I have wandered

and wandered up here for no reason in particular, trying to believe you are not in Cannes, trying to master my ungovernable desire to be with you only once again."

"It is all of a piece with our being thrust together that day upon the train," she cried impetuously. "What have we done that such things should be forced upon us?"

"Come out at least into the sunshine," he said, taking her cold hand. "You will be chilled in this dreary place."

Giving a douceur to the poor guardian of the premises, they went together to a point of the hillside whereon the trunk of a fallen tree offered a semblance of a seat.

Helen, actually nerveless, dropped upon it, Glynn standing beside her, neither daring to speak first.

"You know that I am leaving to-morrow?" he asked finally.

"Posey told me so last night," she answered.

"She told you what was to follow my return at the end of March?"

"Yes."

"The question is, Am I a man of honor or a scoundrel?" he went on with a frowning

brow. "I have thought of it so long, so intensely, that my judgment has ceased to act. Helen, you have the clearest mind, the most well-balanced conscience I ever knew——"

"You can say that, when I was so false to myself and you as to let you go that time in New York, before all these complications came upon us?" she interrupted him bitterly. "But there, what is the use? We have parted, there is no hope, let us never speak of ourselves together again. If it is your duty to Posey, to her father, that torments you; I bid you keep your pledge. It is impossible that you should now make any motion to withdraw from it. The one terrible thing to me was that we should all go on and Poesy have no idea what you and I once were to each other——"

"Nobody could know that," the man said sturdily. Helen shivered.

"But you have relieved me of that fear," she hurried on. "I saw at once, last night, that you had told her——"

"Only that you were the woman I had loved before plighting myself to her. She knows nothing of the circumstances of our

acquaintance. That is my secret, mine only, to be treasured till I die."

"She knows enough, however, to make clear the way between us," Helen made further haste to say. "If you are kind now, you will end this conversation that ought never to have begun. I shall be leaving Cannes shortly. My father is coming for me in his yacht. Before I see you again you will have in your keeping the happiness, the trust, of one—no, two, of the kindest, most confiding creatures God ever made. Never think that it is I who could try and weaken you at the outset of such a task. If necessary, rather let Posey think that I have grown cold to her than run the risk of such a re-awakening of old feeling as we two have innocently suffered from to-day."

Her voice dropped to a whisper. Violet shadows had formed under her eyes, the lines around her mouth had deepened painfully. But when she looked at him full in the eyes, he knew there would be no more weakening in his direction. Presently she arose, and they walked together to the foot of the hill, where Helen hailed a passing carriage and asked him to put her in it. A moment more, and Glynn was indeed alone.

As he walked rapidly homeward, he forced his mind away from the overpowering interest of this last chance interview to dwell upon minor things, among which he was inclined to classify even the settling of the affair with Posey's tormentor, Mrs. Darien. He had, according to his engagement with that lady, gone over to Nice by an early train the day following their interview in the garden. He had found her in the melancholy splendors of a saloon bedroom in a cheap hotel, with a screen half encircling an untidy couch, a dressing-table littered with strange scents and unguents, shabby finery hanging upon hooks, and a *chaise longue* of rusty plush drawn up before a writing-table containing, in addition to its blotter and inkstand, a case of liqueurs and glasses.

Mrs. Darien, for which he yielded her credit, made no attempt to apologize for her poor surroundings. She received her visitor with astonishing ease and vivacity; talked rapidly and cleverly of contemporaneous topics, and when he came, without overmuch delay, to the point of the business that brought him, treated Mr. Glynn in a semi-coquettish, rallying spirit, as though he were proposing to her a

very good joke. She closed upon his offer like a vice, however, and affixed her name to the paper forfeiting the liberal allowance he had decided to make her should she be again heard of as molesting Miss Winstanley with an eager, trembling hand. Glynn had decided, as he walked away from her into purer air, that drink or morphia, or both, were driving the ex-Lady Clandonald to an end at a fearful rate of speed. He had paid high for this visit to Nice, but it counted as nothing provided she left Mr. Winstanley's little ewe lamb in peace.

The two girls met at luncheon at Lady Campstown's, who had spent the morning in letting Posey experiment upon her nerves in the Winstanley's automobile. Posey felt proud indeed of this success, when she brought home the dowager (at the utmost limit of speed disallowed by law), thrilled and enchanted, after beginning her expedition with closed eyes and a prayer upon her lips. Mr. Winstanley, who had long since abandoned himself to sharing risks with his girl, sat beside his guest, exhibiting to the public the ex-

terior of a diver for pearls combined with a hippopotamus.

Flushed by conquest, Posey had recovered her buoyant spirits, and their meal was enlivened by her old daring sallies. She even ventured, in the welcome absence of Miss Bleecker, upon introducing an imitation of that lady, in an entanglement of eye-glasses, trying to read the dinner menu at sea. Lady Campstown, who thought less of Miss Bleecker than she had before seeing her recent barefaced designs upon Mr. Winstanley, enjoyed this very much; but Posey confessed it had not been a success at home, owing to Mr. Winstanley not relishing satire directed toward acquaintances, and considering Miss Bleecker, on the whole, "a very polite and agreeable lady."

When Posey separated from Helen after lunch she felt that a little frost had fallen upon their friendship. She instinctively realized that things could not be between them what they were before Glynn had owned to her he had first loved Helen. Something told her that it needed time to smooth over a situation like their own. After John left on the morrow she would, perhaps, see dear Helen with a lighter heart.

CHAPTER IX

Mr. Glynn had sailed away again, and preparations for the wedding had already begun to absorb Miss Winstanley. She had been gone for a week in Paris with Lady Campstown when Mr. Carstairs' yacht, the "Sans Peur," made its appearance in the harbor. Previous to this, it may be told, Miss Bleecker had privately received and cashed a draft upon her bankers that had put the chaperon in unprecedented funds and spirits. She had received also a telegram of instructions from Mrs. Carstairs, at Gibraltar, directing her to engage for their party a suite of costly apartments at the Grand Hotel. Full of importance, she swelled here, there and everywhere, detailing to all ears the grandeur and importance of her employers, and basking in the rays of glory they sent before them. She needed a little cheering at this time, since Mr. Winstanley had remained inflexible, declining her offers to bear him company on his terrace, and treating her persistently as a worthy elderly

person, beyond the pale of pleasures that do not belong to the late afternoon of life.

For Helen the days preceding the arrival of the "Sans Peur" were profoundly sad ones. Putting aside her feelings upon another theme, her dread of reunion with Mrs. Carstairs robbed her of all joy in her dear father's coming. In vain Miss Bleecker drummed into her ears how nobler far it is to give than to receive, how a self-sacrifice like hers would bring its own reward, how Helen was destined to be the blessed medium through whom joy and harmony would descend upon the Carstairs family for evermore.

If a faint—ever so faint—hope survived in Helen's mind that her stepmother's specious assurances of good-will to her and devotion to her father were to be credited, this faded upon her first visit to the yacht. In the cabin where she herself had once reigned as queen she found Mrs. Carstairs, coarsened, indefinably repellant, although still superb in bloom and with a Rubens lady's plenitude of physique. Around her were grouped two or three men, making up the party of which Helen was expected to be the bulwark of respectability. One of them, a Mr. Danielson, Helen disliked

promptly and instinctively; none would she have admitted into the circle of her acquaintances at home. When Mr. Carstairs, after some delay, made his appearance, Helen was shocked beyond measure to behold in him a mere weary wraith, beside whom his wife seemed to flaunt her beauty and splendid health with insolence. His greeting of his daughter was indifferent, abstracted. She found it impossible to have a word alone with him. The thought of the cruise before her lay like ice on Helen's heart.

Before Mr. and Mrs. Carstairs had spent a week in Cannes the lady declared it to be a poky hole and wished she had gone to Nice. To Nice they accordingly repaired, and in due course of time sailed for Naples. While Mrs. Carstairs rattled and joked noisily with her other guests, she reserved for the handsome cad at whom Helen had taken special umbrage a reserve of manner more suspicious to an interested looker-on. To Helen, a petty agony of the cruise was that Mr. Danielson should conceive himself obliged to devote most of his leisure hours to attendance upon the owner's daughter, refusing with fatuous persistency to be shaken off. A few brief scorn-

ful words of remonstrance on this subject, addressed to her stepmother, were met by the laughing assurance that there was really nothing for Helen to apprehend, and that a man so universally run after as was Mr. Danielson, by what Mrs. Carstairs called the "fair sex," must meet the risk of having his casual attentions misinterpreted at times.

Proud, wounded, scornful, feeling that her standard of life had dropped to an unendurable point, Helen got into the habit of keeping to herself as much as practicable. At Naples she would take her own maid and absent herself for hours from the yacht and its dubious company. To her father there was actually no chance of being what she had hoped. He was mostly captious, preferring to be left alone when his wife did not vouchsafe him her companionship—which was now a rare event. The great Mr. Carstairs was, indeed, socially a cipher among these half-breeds, who drank his wines and allowed him to pay their expenses of travel.

Miss Bleecker, under the infatuation of Mrs. Carstairs' liberal money-spending, of their luxurious living and continual seeking of pleasure and excitement in which she was

included when, as usual, Helen refused to go —became as a broken reed in support of her charge's movements. Poor old Eulalie, with some sense of the loss of refined surroundings they had sustained, and a hearty dislike of the imperative chaperon, ranged herself exclusively upon the side of her young lady—refusing to fraternize with Mrs. Carstairs' maid, whom she regarded as a second-rate creature in every way, and going through the routine of life in general with a dogged determination to endure unto the end.

A day came at last when Miss Carstairs went out to Pompeii with her maid, instead of to the museum in Naples, where she had announced her intention of spending the afternoon.

She left Eulalie sitting upon an immemorial stone and wandered off alone through the beautiful sad place. To the guardian, who would fain have followed her, she gave a piece of money and a gracious smile, explaining that she knew it all by heart, and wanted only to gain a general impression of the dead city on that day of radiant spring. She had been standing for some time near the tomb of Mamia, looking out over the bay and moun-

tains of Castellamare melting together in sunshine, and, recalled to the present by the lateness of the hour, started to walk back to where she had left the monumental Eulalie.

Her resolution to leave the yacht, to abandon the party, and if needs be to forfeit all that her acquiescence had secured for her, was now definitely taken. To avoid discussion, she would simply ask her father to allow Miss Bleecker and herself to go up to Rome, where Mr. Carstairs could never abide visiting, on the ground that he did not like living over catacombs and being face to face with so many things already done for. He knew Helen's tender passion for the Imperial City, and might excuse her from going on with them to Sicily.

From Miss Bleecker she felt sure of meeting fierce and stubborn resistance to her plan. The dream of Miss Bleecker's life had been a cruise in the "Sans Peur," and it was hardly to be supposed she would easily relinquish it. But Helen felt that upon occasion she could be stubborn too. Any clash of wills, and subsequent victory for her, was worth undertaking, to rid her of the offensive companionship of Mrs. Carstairs—and one other.

She could not be sure of what she suspected between them. She scorned to make herself assured. She could not stoop to the miserable method necessary to the acquirement of dread certainty. And yet "she was walking every day with bare feet on a burning pavement without feeling the burn."

Passing with noiseless step before a house-wall arising like a screen before her path, she paused for a moment to enjoy one last gaze at the pageant of sea and sky in the light of waning day. In this brief time the sound of her own name spoken by low voices behind the ruined wall forced themselves upon her hearing. They were those of her stepmother and the man Danielson.

Two phrases interchanged, but they told Helen all. She could never again indulge in the misery of doubt.

She stood for an instant as if overtaken by the lava flow that had devastated the homes of seventeen centuries ago surrounding her. The one despairing, driving impulse was to steal away unseen by the woman who dishonored her dear father's name. Helen thought she had rather fall down and die and become embedded with the dust of ages than

go back to face Mrs. Carstairs and let her know she had found her out.

As the couple, without discovering her neighborhood, moved in an opposite direction, Mr. Carstairs' daughter took wings to her feet and flew to pick up Eulalie and find the cab they had left before the Hotel Diomed. The maid, sluggish though were the workings of her mental part, saw that her mistress had had a fright, and blamed herself for losing sight of her. Helen's cheeks were white, her hands shook as though palsied, as she sprang into the cab and bade the man drive fast, fast, back toward the town. She wished, at all events, to avoid being caught up with or passed by the pair, who could not at that hour linger much longer within the enclosure.

During the long joggling drive through interminable stony streets, encumbered by the populace of the Neapolitan suburbs, performing their domestic avocations out of doors, she came to a desperate conclusion. She was of age sufficiently mature to act for herself. She could not, would not, give her reasons to her father. But she would carry out her recent determination to leave the yacht at once, forfeit the price that had been paid her to be

an infamous blind, and, at any risk, sever her present connection with Mrs. Carstairs.

Helen possessed the American woman's promptitude in action. She drove with Eulalie to an hotel formerly frequented with her father, engaged a room for the night, and sent the maid to the yacht with a note requesting Miss Bleecker to come to her. The interview resulting with her estimable chaperon was perhaps one of the most painful of her experience. The lady, to whom she gave in explanation of her resolve a bare statement that she could no longer endure the trial of life with her stepmother, exhausted herself in remonstrance and reproach. She pointed out to Helen that the money from her father could still be, and no doubt would be, withdrawn upon announcement of Miss Carstairs' extraordinary move. Helen declared that, well aware of this fact, she was prepared to live on the small income coming to her from her mother's estate. Miss Bleecker reminded her that her father was in evidently wretched health, and that no whim or temper should stand between him and his daughter's attendance at his side. Helen, blushing scarlet, with tears in her eyes, recalled to Miss

Bleecker that she had not been allowed access to her father's own cabin since they had been together on the cruise, and that, furthermore, he did not appear to want her. Miss Bleecker called Heaven to witness that she had no patience with family jars, had no axe to grind on her own account, but that if Helen persisted in her wilful determination she should feel it *her* bounden duty not to forsake poor Mrs. Carstairs if wanted to remain.

That evening, between nine and ten, Mrs. Carstairs called upon Miss Carstairs, but was not received. Helen sent back, in a hotel envelope, her stepmother's card, across which she had written these words:

"I happened to be at Pompeii this afternoon, but no other than myself shall know under what circumstances you also were there. It is enough that we must part."

Next day Mrs. Carstairs announced to her guests that they were sailing for Sicily, and as Miss Carstairs did not desire to go farther South, she had decided to return by train to the Riviera, to visit her friend, Miss Winstanley, at Cannes, and would rejoin the "Sans Peur" later, somewhere in the Mediterra-

nean. Then the "Sans Peur" steamed gallantly away, bearing Miss Bleecker, now installed as companion to the owner's lady, and Mr. Carstairs, keeping his cabin, it was said, with a bad attack of some trouble undeclared.

The same evening, as Helen was about taking her train for Genoa and the Riviera at the *Stazione Centrale,* she met, face to face on the platform, Lord Clandonald and M. de Mariol, returning by way of Corfu, Brindisi and Naples from the Peloponnesus, where they had finally brought up after their ramble in Eastern Europe. The two men greeted her with cordial courtesy, receiving in sum the explanation of her presence made public by Mrs. Carstairs. Mariol, from whom she shrank a little, in the fear that he might remember against her with rancor the refusal of his addresses, showed no consciousness that this episode had occurred between them. He was his old self, gentle, sympathetic, with an exquisite intelligence in dealing with her such as no other man had exhibited. He saw her into her own compartment with her maid, and before bedtime returned there several times, to take the seat vacated by Mlle. Eulalie, who

had carried her accustomed headache to an open window in the corridor.

Before they had talked ten minutes Helen realized that her great crisis was understood and felt by him. In her overstrained and overburdened state the relief of finding a soul in tune with her desolate one was infinite. She let him know just as much as was necessary of the impelling cause of her action, and also that in accepting Miss Winstanley's invitation in a recent letter to return to Cannes, "if only to see the spring flowers," she was doing so until she could make up her mind just how to readjust her life to altered circumstances.

M. de Mariol said little, but thought much, after he had left Miss Carstairs for the night. Clandonald had come once to look after both of them, and their talk had turned into cheerful channels. Both men were brown and healthy and in good spirits, Mariol on his way to Paris, Clandonald to Cannes, to visit his good aunt. They touched upon the subject of the Winstanleys' rise into fortune and worldly vogue, Clandonald saying that Lady Campstown had written him of Miss Winstanley's approaching marriage with Mr. Glynn. In his frank, untroubled face Helen failed to dis-

cern any symptom of corroding care, and once more she registered an experience of the brevity of men's attachments when their object is removed.

During the day's journey that followed, dashing in and out of tunnels, catching glimpses of Paradise cut short by the blackness of the Inferno—or, as some one has aptly said, "Travelling through a flute and seeing daylight through its stops"—M. de Mariol absorbed the chief part of Miss Carstairs' society, putting forth for her the best of his rare powers of charm and companionship. When Clandonald and herself finally left the train at Cannes, and Mariol went on his way Paris-wards, Helen breathed a genuine sigh of regret for a void not to be filled.

The welcome she received from the Winstanleys went far toward reconciling Miss Carstairs to the necessity for a continuance of interest in human existence. Those warm and simple-hearted people, refusing to allow her to stop at an hotel alone with her maid, opened their home to her with rejoicing hospitality. Nothing that she had ever seen of a kindred nature seemed to her as broad and warm as their delight in offering her a shelter.

Posey's quick wit divined that a terrible break had occurred between Helen and her father's party; her delicacy withheld all questions as to its cause. It was enough that Helen Carstairs, to whom she had looked up with the veneration of a devotée on his knees before his shrine, had come upon a time of sorrow, of disillusion, of deep and lasting despondency, and that it was Posey's privilege to afford her protection and sympathy until the dark hour was past. It never entered into her generous nature to draw the contrast between the days, not so long past, when Helen had kept her at arm's-length, and she was the outsider. Nothing that she could do was too much to cheer Helen, to make her feel one of their innermost circle of home, more than a welcome, a cherished guest.

In this atmosphere of tender *prévenance* Helen's bruised spirit quickly recuperated. She did not relax in her intention to make a small independent home for herself somewhere, a condition of things her father's continued silence seemed to bring ominously near. She had no illusions as to the fact that Mrs. Carstairs had represented her conduct to her father in the most unfavorable, unpardonable

light. A little while she would remain as the Winstanleys' guest, then would tell Posey that she had found it obligatory to shift for herself and to live upon far less than she had ever done before.

The means of escape from her *impasse* came to Miss Carstairs from an unexpected quarter. Three days after her arrival at Reine des Fées, while sitting with Posey in the orange walk, a letter was handed her addressed in M. de Mariol's handwriting.

Helen blushed violently, then grew pale, as she laid it aside to read in private. She felt that it must contain a renewal of his former offer of marriage, and this time the old feeling of unfitness was lacking. She was conscious only of the great unselfishness and generosity which this man of intellectual distinction and wide renown had always shown to her. She could see now that life is possible without either the thrills of young passion or the costly material pleasures that wealth provides. Her future, as the wife of M. de Mariol, would be assured of certain elements of happiness quite apart from the demands of her past, but on the whole as satisfying to a reasonable being. He had told her that his means enabled him

to be independent of the charge of fortune-hunting. He knew that she was now, by her own act, almost impoverished, and yet he still wanted her. He was well-born, admirably bred, in a social surrounding that would continually interest her, and was, as always, a true and loyal gentleman. Above all, her future home would be far removed from the unspeakable black cloud that must hang over it in America. And yet——

Posey's happy voice sounded in her ear. "You aren't going to read your letter, now? Then you'll let me talk? You haven't forgotten that we're dining to-night at Villa Julia? Do you think I had better wear my rose chiffon, or the little white crêpe de chine with silver embroideries that came from the bazaar in Cairo? It was so strange Lord Clandonald should have taken the hour to call yesterday, when we were sure to be at the Golf Club with all the world. You say he looks well, Helen? Bigger, browner, stronger? I have been thinking all yesterday and to-day of dear Lady Campstown's joy in his return. When she heard he was coming she quite forgot me, and my poor diminished shade crept into insignificance.

With her own dear little thin hands she smoothed his bed-linen, and put flowers on his dressing-table. Ah, how much love means, Helen! It's been growing on me every day, that all the rest is poor flimsy stuff. . . . I think Lady Campstown has made me over, and my breast swells in gratitude to her. I even love daddy better for loving her. . . . If I can only end by loving John as much as I love them!"

"Posey!" said her friend, shivering.

"Don't say you feel the mistral, Helen. It simply can't get to us in this sheltered spot. Dear, I wish you'd be happy, too. For some reason that I can't tell, I'm simply bubbling over to-day. One of my wild fits, I reckon. It began when I got your wire saying you were actually going to be good enough to come and stay with me, without that hateful old Bleecker—there, I feel better. '*Celà soulage!*' as the woman in that play at the Gallia said when she had boxed her husband's ears—and then, and then——"

"Posey!" repeated Helen, with a sort of awe in her voice.

She had noted, with astonishment and pain, the girl's uncontrollable delight at the knowl-

edge of Clandonald's actual vicinity to her. She had watched her, all the day before, fluttering with excitement and expectation, dropping for a while into bitter disappointment when they had returned home, to find only his cards!

"Helen, you think I'm impatient for this evening to come, but I'm not. I can wait perfectly well to see Lady Campstown with her 'boy.' But you know how the person somebody you love is always talking about and waiting for, seems the one you want most to see. Not a day this winter that the old darling hasn't talked to me of 'Clan.' I believe I know about every incident of his life, except the gloomy ones connected with his marriage—his first pony, his scarlet fever, all the rest of it——"

Helen's anxious brow cleared.

"I suppose it's natural, but you mustn't forget, my dear, that he's very handsome and charming, and your fancy took a little turn that way on shipboard—and that you are soon to be married to John Glynn."

Posey heaved a long, genuine sigh.

"I don't forget. I'm all right for John, only I wish I could be free a little longer. I

should think you'd know nothing would tempt me to be in love with a man whose wife isn't dead. Anyhow, I told John every single thing that ever passed between Clandonald and me, not the tiniest thing hidden. Of course John saw I couldn't help being more interested, in a certain way, in Clandonald than in any man I ever saw before."

"Not of course, Posey," said Helen, half smiling. "There are even some people who might consider the man you have more 'interesting' than the man you might have had."

"Oh! John is a darling. Everybody knows that, but their looks are not to be compared—why, Helen, he's not as tall as Clandonald by several inches—he hasn't that beautiful set of the head upon the shoulders, just such as I should think a king would have—and that rich, thick brown hair—Helen, it's really dreadful how thin John's hair is getting on the top."

Helen dropped her book upon the ground.

"Don't, Posey," she exclaimed, almost sharply. "It isn't worthy of you to talk such nonsense."

"Ah, well," said the girl, mischievously, "I feel like saying those little things some-

times, it seems to relieve the tension. . . . Helen, don't look at me with such a face," she added, with sudden gravity. "It almost makes me think that though John is going to marry me, you haven't entirely stopped caring for him. . . . How pale you are! You frighten me! . . . You know you do, you know you do, and he—? How could he love me when he had you near? I see it all now. He would like to get you back; he has never really wanted me, and I'm only to be taken because of his duty to my father."

The April mood had changed. Great drops of crystal welled into her blue eyes and dropped upon her cheeks. Impelled by desperate resolve, Helen sprang upon her feet.

"Don't cry, dear. Don't cry, my darling Posey. You are over-nervous, and it isn't wise for us to prolong a talk like this. I will leave you for a little while alone, to go in and read my letter, and when we meet again at luncheon, I may have something to tell you about myself that will take away all fear of my ever coming between you and your John Glynn."

CHAPTER X

Clandonald had now been two whole days in Cannes without treating himself to a glimpse of the young woman with whom he had parted in a fog off Liverpool. And yet this was not through indifference, or forgetfulness, for in all his wanderings the image of the fair American, his "Goddess of Liberty," as he liked to think of her, had gone with him persistently, in spite of the unpleasant fact that he knew her to be engaged to, and now on the point of matrimony with, another man. Even Mariol had not found out how keenly the news of the forthcoming nuptials of Miss Winstanley and Mr. Glynn had cut into his friend's sensibilities. Rather than meet her, Clandonald would fain have avoided the Riviera altogether, to go on direct to London, but for the pleading image of his dear old aunt, who was counting upon him to come to her. Nobody suspected that in a long, flat pocket-book of Viennese leather, presented to him at parting by Lady Campstown—and for a wonder in woman's gifts,

actually available by the male recipient—he carried a picture of Posey, cut out of an English illustrated paper, found in a wayside inn in Roumania, among other "Beauties of the Day and Hour." It was a charming characteristic pose in which the photographer had caught her, and the gown and coiffure showed the girl's advance in worldly style and knowledge of how to make the most of her advantages. Here, indeed, would have been a Lady Clandonald, amply equipped to take her place in the picture gallery of Beaumanoir among the beauties of their line! And in her frank young face he could read no trace of the unwholesome tastes and proclivities that had wrecked him through Ruby Darien. It was a folly, a childish weakness, to treasure this scrap of paper in his breast pocket close over his heart, and he had resolved that he would soon violently dispossess himself of the same by casting it in the fire. Let him meet her once again, have speech with her in the ordinary way, realize that she was entirely absorbed in preparations for her union with another, and it would be easier to be done for good and all with this strange, obstinate, enduring obsession.

It was not the best atmosphere for a man in his state of mind to find himself in daily intercourse with his impulsive old aunt, whose life had been for weeks and months saturated with the influence of Posey's personality. Although Lady Campstown honestly believed herself to be doing everything that feminine tact and zeal could inspire to extol to him the desirability of Helen Carstairs as a wife, she was really setting forth Posey's charm from morning until night. She told Clandonald how the girl had first come to her, tall and nymph-like, through the avenue of palms, with violets, white and blue, clustered around her footprints. How, immediately, her first distaste of the dreaded American neighbor had been swept away in the girl's sweet appeal to her friendship; how she had then only done for her what she would have had another woman do, in like case, for her own Lucy, had she lived. And how, little by little, she had grown to wait upon Posey's daily coming, to laugh with her, to sympathize in her needs and perplexities, until she counted a day lost when Miss Winstanley did not appear to irradiate it.

"At the same time, my dear," the dowager

said, interrupting herself, "I am not going to pretend that there are not other girls in the world as engaging and lovable as she. Miss Carstairs, for example, is—er—*most* distinguished in her appearance, and has admirable manners. Posey tells me that her friend Helen is so highly educated she makes her feel as ignorant as a street Arab. Of course, that's only the child's American habit of exaggeration. She really reads and studies part of every day, and her literature teacher, Miss Barton, says Miss Winstanley's memory for facts and grasp of ideas is something quite out of the common. As I was saying, Helen Carstairs is just the kind of person I should think would bear transplanting into English life. She is so simple and unemotional and self-contained. When you go to Reine des Fées to call—when did you say you were going to call, Clan dear?"

"I don't think I said, Aunt Lucy," answered her nephew, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Ah, well, dear, probably it will be to-day, as you have now had time to draw breath after telling me all about your travels. You must have had a very pleasant journey from Naples in company with Miss Carstairs."

"Yes, very pleasant, what Mariol would let me have of her. He was very absorbent, it must be said. You know I told you once, long ago, that I believed good old Mariol had actually knocked under to a fair Yankee, and I have now every reason to believe that this lady is the object of his secret cult."

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Lady Campstown, for her, almost sharply. "I can't imagine a more unsuitable idea. These marriages with Frenchmen rarely turn out well. At least, unless the man has a title and a château, and the foreign wife would have some interests in the country. A mere brilliant, drifting, scoffing creature like M. de Mariol—! Think of that book of his I found on your table and tried to read. Why, there were ideas in it that made my hair stand on end."

"Moral: Aunt Lucys shouldn't carry off the French books they find on their nephews' tables," answered he, teasingly. "It is a fact, however, that Miss Carstairs seemed to find extreme satisfaction in her long-continued duet with my clever chum. It was as much as I could do to get a word in edgewise."

"I am surprised, and I must say a little

put out, Clan. I shouldn't think you'd have given her up like that to any man, however friendly he might be."

"To give up argues to have had. And I cannot truly claim to have established any monopoly in the young lady's society. Aunt Lucy, dear, I won't tease you any more. As our American friends say, 'you've been barking up the wrong tree.' It was never Miss Carstairs that turned my poor, weak brain. I admire, esteem her cordially, and think Mariol would get an ideal wife if she would smile on him—but love her—never in this world."

"But you *said* I might think what I pleased as to your being spooney about an American girl, that day you brought her to Beaumanoir and afterward told me you had decided to go away again. It was virtually acknowledging that you loved her, and but for the abominable interference of a person who shall be nameless, would have pressed your suit."

"They said that in Lord Byron's days, Aunt Lucy, or was it Miss Edgeworth's? And you have been dwelling on that rash admission of mine, and building air castles

with me and Miss Carstairs looking out of the windows all these months in consequence? No, best of aunties, you are horribly out of focus. You've got hold of the wrong person altogether. I don't in the least mind letting you know that I made all kinds of a fool of myself on that voyage over last October. I dreamed dreams never to be realized. And, as the powers of mischief willed it, Ruby seeing my name announced for that sailing, had taken a second-class passage on the same ship, with the laudable hope of 'making it hot for me,' she said. She succeeded but too well. She peppered an innocent young girl with vile anonymous notes that made her shun the sight of me. After I got to town, she wrote to me directly, and to buy her off I made certain sacrifices I could ill afford. As far as I know to the contrary, I did buy her off. I count any money well spent that would keep shame and sorrow out of the life of the girl I set out to champion. She never knew of it, she very likely wouldn't care. She probably went on her straight, clean path of life, and forgot everything connected with me. Yes, it *was* an American girl, Aunt Lucy, but she wasn't Helen Carstairs."

"My poor boy, my darling Clan," began the dowager, then choked and remained silent.

"I know you'll never ask me who it was, dear, so I'll make haste and put you out of your misery. Did it never occur to you that your admiration for Miss Winstanley might be a family failing?"

"Oh! not *that*, Clan. Never *that!* To think you got so near anything that would have given me such pure joy——"

"I didn't get near, that was just the trouble. I believe she liked me, perhaps better than any other man on board, till Ruby's doings came between us. But she gave me unmistakably to understand there could be nothing again after we parted then. Of course, when I heard later that she was engaged to this man Glynn——"

"Who is really a fine, manly fellow, Clan; you couldn't help liking him. But, oh! why couldn't he have fancied the Carstairs girl and left my Posey for you? And, my dear, it is just a marvel to me. Posey, who is as open as a spring morning when there isn't a cloud in the sky; Posey, who never prevaricates or hesitates about the truth, how could

she let me go on, day after day, hour after hour, talking about you——"

"A fine evidence of her polite endurance, Aunt Lucy. Poor Miss Winstanley!"

"How could she, I say, without giving me the least little hint that you had fallen in love with her?"

"I suppose because she considered that my secret."

"Now that I think it over, it seems to me that she almost always managed to turn the conversation in your direction. She certainly showed the utmost relish in whatever I had to tell her, good, bad or indifferent."

"There was no occasion for the use of either of the two last adjectives, when I was your subject," said Clandonald, looking at her with tenderness, more touched than he chose to show.

"No, my dear, there wasn't, I must say. Oh! Clan, it all comes back to me with a rush. Why, Posey has been just *living* on talk of you and reminiscences of you ever since we have been together. And I thought it was only I!"

"Take care, Aunt Lucy," the man said, getting up to stride back and forth across

the room. "This is dangerous doctrine you're preaching, when Miss Winstanley's wedding-day is set."

"God forgive me, so it is," answered Lady Campstown, the tears rushing into her eyes.

"Let us make a pact, will you?" said Clandonald, stopping presently. "I have gone over and left my pasteboards in due form at Reine des Fées, at a time when you told me the ladies were likely to be at the Golf Club."

"Yes, and I was really quite put out about it, but I see now that it was better so."

"And I shall meet the young lady at dinner here this evening, according to your plan. There will be several outsiders. I shan't have much chance to speak with her, and after that——"

"Clan, don't suggest that you will leave me after that. Indeed, I couldn't stand it; you positively must stay. I should tell you that you won't run much chance of seeing Posey privately, in any case. She's tremendously taken up with fitters and people who come down from Paris to bring things for her to see. Besides, Miss Carstairs isn't in good spirits, I find, and no wonder—I believe she just broke and ran away from that dread-

ful vulgar stepmother. We heard enough of Mrs. Carstairs' doings the little time she was here to be thankful she took herself off. There's trouble brewing for the husband, if all one is told is true. Posey watches over Helen like a mother-bird, and hardly leaves her. Besides, they are expecting at any day or time the return of Mr. Glynn. He hasn't cabled, but it was understood he was to get aboard the first available ship sailing for Cherbourg or the Mediterranean ports the hour after he finished some critical business he had on hand for his chief. (The way these Americans fly fairly takes one's breath away!) So there is no reason for you to go from here, if you think there's to be any embarrassment resulting from your meeting with her. The days will glide on fast enough to the wedding!" she ended with a deep and heartfelt sigh.

"I don't want to run in face of the enemy, indeed," he said, trying for a more cheerful face. "I think I'll stroll out in the garden and smoke a pipe, and try and settle my perturbed spirit. And you, dear, what will you do with yourself this afternoon?"

"The carriage is ordered, soon, for a round

of visits I have to make. How much rather had I spend the time, as I often do at this hour, going in through the green door to sit with Posey in the orange walk—near the fountain with the broken-nosed Triton, you remember. It's her favorite spot, and nothing but rain will prevent her sitting there for an hour with her book or work."

"Then I'll see you at tea-time, if not before."

"I'll be back, you may trust me. Nothing I dislike more than having my tea out, at houses where a woman sits behind a little table, talking to everybody that comes, and mixing the most abominable doses of half-cold tea, and too much cream and sugar, for her unoffending guests, forgetting whether the water boils or the tea-pot has stood too long! Keep to the bamboo walk, my dear, the mistral is blowing hard to-day, and you're not like me, acclimatized to it. Down there you'll be sheltered and private, and can smoke your pipe in peace."

Clandonald had hardly left his aunt standing before the fireplace in her sunny draw-

ing-room, pondering upon the surprising intelligence he had communicated, when Lady Campstown's parlor-maid came in with a rather frightened face.

"Well, Parks, what is it? Have you broken a piece of my old Sèvres in putting out the dessert service, or has pussy had a fit?"

"It's only, mylady," said the girl, haltingly, "that the—er—lady you gave us orders not to admit has driven up to the gate in a cab, and insists upon seeing you on business of the highest importance, so she says."

"You mean the person calling herself Mrs. Darien?" asked the dowager, in icy tones.

"That were the name, your ladyship."

"What can I do?" passed through Lady Campstown's much-perturbed and angered brain. "Clan's being here complicates matters dreadfully. She is quite capable of making a scene that will echo through the neighborhood. I have declared that I will not again hold speech with her. If she were herself, I believe even she would not push into my house and presence. The horrible fear is that she is not herself, but under the influence of

drink. In that case I must get old Rosa, who loves her still, to take her off quietly.

"Say that Lady Campstown will see Mrs. Darien for ten minutes before she goes out to keep an engagement. And, Parks, tell the cab to wait. Not outside the front gate, but in the lane at the bottom of the garden. And, Parks, send Rosa to me at once."

The Provençal servant, called Rosa, with a rather pale and guilt-stricken face and manner, came hastily into the drawing-room, stepping back to hold open its door for Mrs. Darien, who followed close upon her heels.

"Stop where you are, Rosa," said the mistress of the dwelling, now the great lady in every muscle and fibre of her stately little form. She spoke in the woman's own tongue, and her low, clear voice was charged with indignant emphasis. "From this lady's appearance in my house, I assume that she is in some degree irresponsible for her actions, and that she needs a caretaker to escort her back whence she came. I desire you to make yourself ready to go with her, now, directly, without delay, and not to return under my roof until you can report to me that you have done so."

"No such great hurry, Aunt Lucy," said Mrs. Darien, with careless insolence. "I'm really in a very normal and pacific state of mind, considering the way the mistral is blowing, and that I, last night, spent my last sou at Monte Carlo, and will be turned out of my room at Nice if I can't pay for it before a couple of days have passed."

"You can stoop to ask me for money?" said Lady Campstown, in English.

"When one's flat on the ground one hasn't to stoop, you know," answered the visitor, calmly arranging the folds of her veil drawn over a cheap plumed hat, under which a chalk-white countenance with gleaming eyes revealed itself menacingly. "I chanced to see in the local paper that Clan had arrived to stop with you, and so simply timed my visit when you would feel most impelled to pay to get rid of me. What, for instance, if he were to step in at this moment, through that window into the garden? Wouldn't it be rather cheap at the price to see the last of me for a couple of hundred francs or so?"

Lady Campstown, with a swelling heart, walked over to her escritoire, unlocking a compartment thereof to take out two bank-

notes of the amount indicated. She despised herself for the action, but could not trust her voice to speak.

"Thanks, so very much," said Ruby, superbly putting her gains into a bag of gilded meshes hanging at her waist. "And as I see you flashing the lightning of your virtuous eye upon that poor, shuddering numbskull of a Rosa there, let me at least exonerate her from any complicity in the arrangement for my visit here to-day."

"I have heard that you have been seen lately in the lane below my garden," exclaimed the dowager hotly, "and that some one in my household is under suspicion of having been holding conversation with you in the bamboo walk. I can only say that if this happens again Rosa goes out of my service on the minute."

Ruby, who had been covetously looking around the luxurious, familiar room, shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"I suppose I must not detain you," she said conventionally, turning to withdraw. "But since you have suggested it, I would be really quite glad to have Rosa escort me back to my hotel. The effort of coming here

—perhaps the force of old associations—has proved something of an ordeal to me. My heart is rather spinning around, and I am not altogether sure I can answer for the strength necessary to support my legs on the retreat."

"Go, Rosa, put on your hat and jacket as I bid you, and accompany Madame," said Lady Campstown, nervously anxious to end the scene at any cost. A fuller view of Mrs. Darien's face had showed her the awful extent to which time and an evil life had ravaged it. She would not look at her a second time, but, shuddering, walked away to the window and set it wide open, standing with her back to the offender, in speechless disgust and misery.

To be one minute unobserved was enough for Ruby Darien. She had been standing near a little cabinet, on a shelf of which was accustomed to lie Lady Campstown's own especial pass-key through the little green door into the garden of Reine des Fées. Since the occupation of the place by tenants this had not been used. But things were not wont to change their position often at Villa Julia, and the key still lay in its old corner undisturbed. Ruby's nimble fingers closed upon

and transferred it to the interior of her little gilded bag, while Lady Campstown, resolved not to speak to her visitor again, kept her position at the window.

"I suppose, then, I may go?" said Ruby, laughing softly. "In view of your inhospitable attitude, I have really no excuse for lingering. *Au revoir*, Aunt Lucy. I will return to you your old Rosa unspotted by the world. And if it will add to Clan's pleasure to hear I am near him, give him my compliments."

CHAPTER XI

CLANDONALD, meantime, was walking up and down in the bamboo avenue, chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy. Lady Campstown's loving babble had put him in possession of an idea that haunted him like sweet music. "Posey has been fairly *living* on talk of you and reminiscences of you ever since we met." With all due allowance for the predisposition of the kind speaker in his favor, there was a suggestion of conviction in her manner that he could not forget or put away. Was ever flattery so subtly delicious as this thought? The fine stern resolution he had made to flee from Posey's vicinity seemed to take to itself wings and vanish in thin air. What? Go without seeing her once alone, without thanking her for her kind thought of him, her mission of ministration to his relative in his absence? It would be a truly unheard-of thing to do. He even chose to forget the swiftly advancing marriage—the betrothed lover who was doubtless now upon the ocean,

speeding as fast as steam could bring him to make sweet Posey his. Nothing weighed, nothing counted, beside Clandonald's strong, overpowering desire to look upon her face, to touch her hand again, to have her clear eyes search the recesses of his soul.

In two words, he had come down off his high horse, and was now madly anxious to get inside the Reine des Fées garden on the chance of finding Miss Winstanley sitting alone in the spot indicated by his aunt as her favorite retreat at that hour of the day—the orange walk, near the fountain with the broken-nosed Triton. It was one of the most secluded spots about the grounds, he remembered. Anything might happen there and the inhabitants of the villa be none the wiser for it. What good fortune if he should have the luck to find her alone and undisturbed in this sequestered nook! And even if Miss Carstairs should be with Posey, he would trust to her woman's tact to leave them alone for a little talk.

With an artful affectation of going toward the town, he proceeded to stroll down the walled street for a bit, then turning, doubled on his tracks, and went in at the large gate

of the Villa Reine des Fées, inquiring of the woman who sat in the vine-wreathed doorway of the lodge playing dominoes with an old, old man, and who admired milord Clandonald greatly, whether "the ladies" were at home. Upon receiving from her a smiling assurance that she knew them to be somewhere about the grounds, since her husband, the gardener, had just then called to Miss Winstanley where she sat in the orange walk, to receive some orders about a new flower-bed, he bowed, thanked his informant, and took his way to the designated spot.

Clandonald had regained his boyish beauty after so many days in the saddle and nights under the stars. His complexion was well with healthy blood, the haggard look had fled from his eyes, his magnificent form was in perfect condition, his heart beat like a schoolboy's beneath his summer flannels. As he walked on with a rapid, springing step, he brandished in his hand a Makila stick of tough Pyrenean wood, of which the handle was formed of a single rounded pebble, and having at the lower end an iron spike—one of the dangerous canes fabricated by the Basque peasants, dear to the heart of North-

ern Spain, brought by him from Biarritz, long ago, and left hanging by its leathern loop in his aunt's entry, where, as a relic of her nephew, it was religiously preserved. His hat, of fine Panama braid, shaded his eyes from the too glaring ardor of the Provençal sun after the middle of the day.

The gardener's wife, looking after him, smiled appreciatively. She knew his hard luck story, and, like everybody else, hoped that Clandonald had at last emerged again from under the shadow of the undeserved cloud of Ruby Darien. When he had disappeared behind the shrubbery, and was well out of hearing, the good woman curved her hand around her mouth and remarked to her ancient sire, in a patois hard for an outsider to understand, that she hoped at last the *Bon Dieu* was going to make up to this poor young milord for the troubles He had sent to him—just, for all the world, as if he had been a peasant like themselves!

Clandonald did not notice her further, nor other inhabitant of the enchanted garden than himself, until he arrived through a flowery arch directly in the presence of Miss Winstanley, seated alone upon a marble bench

in a niche of glossy green, wiping tears out of her eyes, like a naughty dryad put in a corner for punishment.

At the same moment, ascending the hill from the town, came another young man, whose destination also was the orange walk, where Posey sat disconsolate. John Glynn, finding at the last moment in New York that he could get a quick passage to Genoa by an ocean greyhound put on for an occasion, had returned to Europe several days before he was expected, and neglecting to wire from Genoa, expected to take his friends here by surprise. He had walked from the station, entering the villa grounds from the lower gate. It seemed to him something queer was inspiring the forces of Nature that afternoon. A strange, weird, exciting wind was astir under brilliant sunshine—a wind to provoke and condone any act of nervous irritability. Glynn felt glad to take refuge from its fury by pausing under a great eucalyptus at the foot of the garden, and resting there a while.

All during his quick eight days' passage across the southern route of the Atlantic, he had been alternately drawn and repelled by the

Like a naughty dryad put in a corner for punishment.
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consideration of his forthcoming marriage. At the idea of his benefactor, the maker of his fortunes, the dear confiding old man whom he could never repay for benefits conferred, he felt ready to march up to the church door and surrender himself to Posey without a look behind. But it was different when the reverie centred upon the young girl whose innocent thoughts were translated into words as fast as her impulse gave them birth, whose fun and daring, joy and pain, succeeded each other like ripples on a summer sea; he wondered if he had a right to make of her an unloved wife.

For since that fateful hour when he had sat close to Helen in the railway train, and since their meeting at the wayside chapel on the hill, their hearts pulsing together, their thoughts yearning each toward the other, stern resolve forcing them apart, he had known that to say he would cease to love Helen had not made it any better with him, as far as the only woman he had ever desired to marry was concerned. Absence from her, a voyage to and from America, tough work which he had surmounted successfully, a negotiation so skilfully concluded that it had

saved Mr. Winstanley grave loss, none of these circumstances had lessened his passionate yearning for her whom he had first held in his arms and kissed as his future wife. When, after one of these outbursts of feeling for Helen, he thought of Posey, it was always with keen shame and abiding pity; it did not seem to him that he was "playing fair"—and yet, here he was, back again at Cannes, the day of the wedding was shortly to be set, and, as Posey's husband, he was to enter upon a career in his native country, the breadth and magnitude of which would surpass the fondest dreams of his ambitious boyhood.

So strong had been the current of inclination turning him from his destined way, that he had actually come afoot from the station, and sent his belongings by a cab, rather than expedite his progress to Reine des Fées by driving. He had no idea that Helen had become a temporary inmate of the establishment. His one letter received from Posey during his swift run home, had described her friend as having sailed away on the "Sans Peur," in company with that "utterly odious Mrs. Carstairs," and "looking so sad and spiritless it wrung one's heart to see her."

Helen in Naples or Sicily, even if he knew her to be far from happy, was better than Helen in Cannes, looking on at his wedding with Posey!

If Glynn could have suspected that at the identical moment, when he was sitting under the eucalyptus tree trying to screw his courage to pushing boldly up the hill, Miss Carstairs was at the writing-table in her room, inditing with hot hands and desperate resolve a letter to Mariol, telling him she would be his wife!

But he dreamed of none of the threads of Destiny weaving together that day and hour while the mistral blew fiercely around Villa Reine des Fées. He only thought he would tarry a little while longer, his legs and spirits feeling weighted as if with lead, before announcing himself at the house, the hero of the "happy event" to come.

A third unexpected visitor to the garden now also advanced from the direction of Villa Julia, and moved furtively behind the hedges toward the Triton fountain.

As Ruby had found herself in the lane about to get into her carriage, with Rosa in attendance, she had caught sight of Clandonald

lightly striding ahead of her, his evident destination the gilded iron grille opening into the drive of Reine des Fées. Instantly, the burning, unreasoning jealousy of Posey, that had never forsaken Mrs. Darien, sprang up again to madden her into action.

What she desired to do, to say, to accomplish, she knew not, but (the bad wind, no doubt, aiding) an evil spirit in her blood commanded her imperatively to enter and lurk in the forbidden garden, with the hope of hearing or seeing something pass between the two. She knew from public announcement that Miss Winstanley was about to marry Glynn, the man who had supposed he had bought Ruby's forbearance from troubling his fiancée. If any prick of conscience assailed the desperate creature it was at thought of her sworn promise to John Glynn—a promise about to be forfeited in most treacherous fashion—to say nothing of her loss of his indispensable allowance. For, in stealing the key of the green door from Lady Campstown, she had really meant to be more mischievous and offensive than openly aggressive. She intended to keep it until the chance came to give, as she termed it, "that vindictive old hag, Aunt Lucy," a

rousing fright, and at the same time, perhaps, satisfy her curiosity as to how things were going on between Clandonald and the Winstanley girl.

And here was her opportunity sooner than she had hoped. She had sharply ordered the alarmed Rosa to keep watch in the cab until her return; had heeded not the woman's beseechings, for the love of all the Saints, not to run this risk of offending Milady Campstown; and had let herself into Reine des Fées by means of the key which Posey had begged Lady Campstown to use at will, now that the green door was kept permanently locked.

To cross the forbidden threshold seemed to inspire Ruby with more rancorous thoughts than ever before. Why should Clandonald, also Glynn, have paid her so heavily to protect this girl, already favored by fortune, whilst she wandered in outer darkness? She hated Posey the more, not only because these two men stood before her, but because Ruby's best endeavor had not seemed to do her material harm; because the girl had ceased being insignificant and was now rich and powerful; and lastly, because Lady Campstown was her best friend.

Ruby knew that by taking the nearer way she would arrive upon the scene before Clandonald could do so, and be safely in ambush watching him. If he were merely to enter the house for a conventional call she could do nothing, and might slip back to rejoin Rosa, unseen. But she counted rather confidently upon what she had ascertained from questioning her tool, that Miss Winstanley and her friend were generally to be found out-doors at this hour of the afternoon.

The sight of Clandonald walking unconcernedly ahead of her, twirling the Makila stick, which she recognized as a souvenir of their joint visit to Biarritz, was as fuel to her flame. He looked so young, so normally vigorous, so full of bounding life; he was so well groomed, so well turned out, as the men were not with whom she associated in the present phase of her existence. How long it was, with the exception of her talk with Glynn, since she had held converse with a clean, wholesome, and courteous gentleman!

And she was so thin, so bloodless, so unbeautiful; her empire over his sex was so nearly gone, she had so little left to hope for!

The immediate result of this contrast be-

tween herself and the man who had once taken her, for better, for worse, at the altar, was to make Ruby Darien furiously angry. As Clandonald passed out of her sight, between the ivied walls of the steeply descending street, she felt that she would have liked to spring upon him like a panther, and—ah! it was better that he had passed on!

Clandonald, as has been said, had unexpectedly stepped in through an arch of crimson ramblers, to find Posey, whom Helen Carstairs had just left to go in to write her letter to Mariol, weeping alone, and lovelier than even he had remembered her.

If Miss Winstanley had been on her guard, or chatting with a friend, or sitting with her book and looking up with a pleasant smile as he drew near, Lord Clandonald might not have forgotten himself, as he now unquestionably did!

Without a moment's forethought, following out the impulse one has to console a child whom one finds in distressful solitude, he made toward her a buoyant movement, taking her hand in both of his, and dropping upon the bench beside her.

In her present period of believing herself, as it were, deserted by John and Helen, who, so fitted for one another, had, figuratively, soared away out of her ken upon a rosy cloud, the girl welcomed Clandonald with lips and eyes too eloquent to be mistaken. Feeling that he must speak, knowing that he ought to choose his words most carefully, he ended by doing nothing of the kind.

"Oh, please don't cry!" he simply said. "You are too dear and lovely ever to shed a tear! If you were mine——"

In books it is where people make the beautiful set speeches that come out just right as to semicolons and periods, besides fitting exactly into place in conversation. In real life, under strong emotion, things are said brokenly that often have neither grammar, rhyme nor reason. This man certainly never meant to make love to this girl out of a clear sky. But his voice, his face, his manner, were all those of a lover such as Posey had not known in her brief experience. And the worst of it was, the same unaccountable, unbidden feeling of delight again rushed over her that she had felt for him upon the ship. It seemed sufficient for him to be near her for that to tingle in her

veins! She thought he was the brightest, noblest object her eyes had ever rested upon, not a mere faulty man idealized. In plain words, "the old, old story was told again" in the garden of Reine des Fées!

But Posey had gained in self-control since her experience of the world. She checked the radiant return movement toward Clandonald, who, also pulling himself together, guiltily arose and stood at some distance away from her, holding his hat like a shy schoolboy, without saying another word.

"I'm not crying," she remarked, somewhat untruthfully. "I'm only thinking over a sad sort of talk I've just had with my friend, Miss Carstairs, who's staying with me, as you know. She told me, by the way, you'd been so nice to her on the journey, and so had M. de Mariol. We were sorry to miss you yesterday, and are looking forward to the dinner this evening. I didn't think you would call again today."

"Neither did I," he said, "but when it came to waiting for my aunt's dinner hour I had to. I hope you won't mind my taking the short cut to Paradise, without ringing at your front door. It got me here the sooner,

see? And as my aunt had happened to let fall that you always came to the Orange Walk about this time, I ventured upon the liberty. But I didn't dare expect such good luck as finding you quite alone."

"Helen has just left me," she answered, a little confused by his ardent gaze. "I can see that it astonished you to find me so much grander than I was. But for me, I'm already used to it. Oh! Do you know, I had the greatest satisfaction yesterday. That Mrs. Vereker, who snubbed me so on the ship, you remember, and that stuffed image of a Mr. Brownlow, were both lunching at the Gold Club, at a table by themselves; and seeing us with some people they thought 'worth while,' came up and spoke to me, almost humbly!"

"How did you treat them in return?"

"I said, 'Oh! really. Are you in Cannes?' And then the Grand Duke asked me some question, and I turned away to him. If the Grand Duke hadn't happened to be there it would have been no fun at all. You see how wicked and worldly I have grown. Then Mr. Brownlow asked if he might call at Villa des Fées, and I said we were so much engaged we hadn't any day at home. Mrs. Vereker is

dying to know Lady Campstown, who doesn't care whether she meets a leader in New York or a leader in Allison's Cross Roads. I won't ask you to tell me about your travels, for darling Lady Campstown has read me every line of your late letters, and even some you wrote her as a boy. I know how you stroked the crew of that splendid boat-race at college, and when you shot the lion on the Upper Nile, and what you ate in South Africa. After my talks with her this winter I used to go home thinking you certainly the biggest and greatest and bravest person in the world!"

Her girlish raillery seemed to him the most delicious fooling. He tossed his hat and stick into the flower-border behind them, and dropped again upon the bench beside her. Beside the cool green shadow of their verdurous niche, the sunshine seemed to lie on the marble pavement beyond, like a slab of gold, the mad wind whistling outside harmless. And neither noticed that Mrs. Darien, who had been standing dark with menace, still as Fate, in the shrubbery at their rear, had leaned over and possessed herself of the dangerous Makila stick.

A few moments later, Glynn, where he sat down in the lower garden, heard Posey scream once, then silence.

He sprang up and flew to the spot whence the sound issued, some under-gardeners reaching it at the same time. They found Miss Winstanley upon her feet, with horror in her eyes, Lord Clandonald endeavoring to lift from the ground the form of a senseless woman, his right arm hanging helpless, an ugly bleeding wound upon his brow.

"It's all right!" he exclaimed to them grimly. "This person attacked Miss Winstanley, and I caught the blow, that's all."

"Oh! John, John, how thankful I am to see you!" cried Posey. "Help Lord Clandonald, please; he is badly hurt. It is Mr. Glynn, Lord Clandonald, and for my sake you must let him serve you."

Clandonald, wavering upon his feet, was glad to be assisted to the bench where they were sitting when Mrs. Darien aimed her deadly blow. But he retained sufficient understanding to thank Glynn, and urge on him the necessity of having the woman, who had been evidently overtaken by some kind of a seizure, removed quietly from the place, and

put in charge of Lady Campstown—" who will understand." After which brief direction, he uttered one sigh, and fainted.

So Helen found the little group whom tragedy had grazed! Posey, holding Clandonald's head in her arms, his limp body lying across the seat! Helen was carrying in her hand the letter she had come outside to show Posey, in fulfilment of her promise to the girl—the letter to Mariol, telling him she would be his wife!

To her, with a hurried explanation of the affair and of his presence there, Glynn consigned Posey, who seemed scarcely conscious of where she was and what had happened, begging Miss Carstairs to take her to her room. Before all things, it was desirable that Miss Winstanley's name should be kept out of the business, which he believed would end favorably for Clandonald. Helen led her away, obedient as a child, although trembling violently, and holding her hand over a spot upon the breast of her white gown where Clandonald's blood had stained it.

Glynn, fetching some water from the fountain, soon brought Mrs. Darien's victim back to consciousness. Clandonald's first act was

to look about for the murderous weapon, and ask Glynn to suppress it; his second to eagerly question the two gardeners, who, having borne Mrs. Darien away, had now returned with remedies from the servants at Villa Julia, secured under pretence that one of their number had met with an accident.

"*Quant à la dame, milor,*" said one of these men, who had been for a long time on the place and knew very well the skeleton in his neighbor's closet. "It was not found necessary to trouble Milady Campstown with her. The housemaid, Rosa, was waiting in the cab, much frightened, since she thought that Madame Darien had looked exceedingly ill when she went into the garden against Rosa's advice. Madame Darien had revived and bidden the men assist her into her carriage, and the housemaid had driven off with her to the station. It was not needful to tell anyone else what occurred, since, the Virgin be praised, no serious harm appeared to have been done.

Glynn, whose French fell short in moments of emergency, tried to explain to the men that his and Mr. Winstanley's gratitude for their excellent service and consideration would con-

tinue to be remembered substantially in proportion to their reticence upon the subject. He emphasized it by a transfer of gold to each brown right hand, which the Provençals received with blushes of becoming modesty.

"And now, you will go back to your work, *comprehendez vous?*" added John, "leaving me to conduct *ce monsieur* to Villa Julia, explaining that a *branch fell from a tree across his cheek and arm!*"

Clandonald smiled wanly.

"That will do for a stop-gap," he said. "But I have my fears that the woman who committed this unexplained assault will again be heard from on the subject. I fancy you know, Mr. Glynn, who she is, and that Miss Winstanley has been for months an object of her virulence."

"I should tell you," said Glynn, while aiding him to get upon his feet, "that I had some experience of Mrs. Darien upon my former visit to Cannes. I, in fact, then found it better to go to her lodgings in Nice, and try to perfect a little arrangement for Miss Winstanley's protection. That, it seems, has failed."

"The person is irresponsible," answered

Clandonald, a dark flush coming into his face. "And, I am afraid, incorrigible."

"All the same, I am going to ask your permission to interfere so far as to look her up again to-night."

"You know that is what I most want?"

"I think so. I put myself in your place."

"More than that no man can do for another," said Clandonald warmly.

After Glynn had gotten him into his own bedroom, called up his servant, and telephoned for the family physician of Lady Campstown (who, herself, remained still fortunately absent upon her round of calls), they parted like friends of years.

CHAPTER XII

THERE was no little dinner at Villa Julia that evening. Clandonald, wretched and feverish, tossed upon his bed. Posey's white face and strained expression of anxiety kept the other villa in a state of suspended animation while Glynn, in the motor car, was running over to Nice on business not stated.

Helen Carstairs met him early next morning upon the terrace, at his request.

"How has she slept?" he asked eagerly.

"Like a tired baby. Toward morning she awoke sobbing, and I soothed her till she fell asleep again. Just now, when I went into her room with the news that Lord Clandonald also had passed a good night, she was very much more like herself—gentle, yet plucky, and determined to keep up."

"I hate a nervous shock for an impressionable woman. Thank God, it is all no worse! Suppose you and I had happened not to be with her—it makes me sick to think of it!

Helen, this isn't the time to beat about the bush to find phrases. Tell me the honest truth. Does Posey love Clandonald?"

"I think so. But she has fought against it from the first. Don't let your sympathy with her at this moment lead you to any rash act of renunciation. She is so young. She will get over it. Besides, she has told me most positively that she could never bring herself to marry a man whose divorced wife is living."

"If that is the only obstacle, it need not count," said Glynn gravely. "The woman who called herself Mrs. Darien died last night—and a blessed solution it is to a miserable snarl. She went back with the housemaid to her hotel in Nice, and they got her into bed. By the time I reached the place the woman, crying bitterly, came down to tell me 'her ladyship' was dead. It was apoplexy—the second attack—precipitated by her insane passion of jealousy of Posey."

"Thank Heaven, it wasn't a murder she had to carry with her into eternity! Our poor darling, Posey—if that horrid flint had struck her in the head where the woman aimed to hit—I can't bear to think of it——"

"Don't. We have shaved the narrow edge,

but have escaped. Helen, one of the strangest things that ever happened to me was that Mrs. Darien left in the blotter on her table a sealed letter addressed to me. I took possession of it by showing the landlord and the doctor my visiting card. I don't know what they thought of me. I don't much care. In it she asked my pardon for breaking her pledge to me. Said she was tempted beyond resistance to return to Villa Reine des Fées, that she was dead broke, desperate, expected to die suddenly some day, and wanted me to know that if she ever could have gone straight again it was because of the way I had trusted her."

"But your trust was in vain," said Helen, with the hardness of most good women toward bad ones. "Therefore I can feel no sentiment for her but one of thankfulness that she is out of your hands, in Higher ones."

They walked back and forth for a few moments in the crisp morning air, Nature smiling as she always does after the poignant scenes enacted in her sight. Mr. Winstanley, who was having his breakfast in the rose-wreathed loggia upstairs, and from whom the incident of the attack on Posey had been kept, saw them and waved his kind hand cordially.

Glynn stopped.

"It's no use, Helen. All the things I long for upon earth would lose their flavor at the cost of ingratitude to him. Even if Posey does believe that she cares most for Clandonald—and if you had heard the words the poor child spoke when she held him, without life, bleeding, against her heart, you would not doubt it—it is not I who can withdraw from my pledge to her."

Helen could not speak. She was thinking of that letter to Mariol, not yet sent. Although she felt now that Glynn meant to keep to his engagement at all costs, she was sure she could never send it; that Mariol's brief mirage of winning her must fade into the desert sands of friendship, if he would be content with that.

During the days that ensued she kept almost altogether with Posey, who was not allowed by her physician to leave her room. And as Helen was in the act of making up her mind to go to Paris to enter as a boarder in the family of a governess of former days, who now gave shelter to art students and girls whose voices were in training for the stage, she received a startling telegram.

It was from her father at Taormina, requiring her presence there without delay. "I am alone and ill," were the magic words that sent her speeding back to him, to find the hapless gentleman deserted by his wife, whose affair with Danielson had ended in guilty flight! Aged, mortified, broken, clinging to Helen in his humiliation, Mr. Carstairs had yet made short work of ridding himself of the unwelcome visitors who had preyed upon his money, while deriding him for a blind old fool not to have seen before the condition of affairs. In the flotsam of the wreck Miss Bleecker, too, floated off, Helen refusing to see her or listen to explanations, and Mr. Carstairs making short work of her prayer to be allowed to remain with poor darling Helen in this awful time.

At last, then, she was again alone with her father, free to cheer and comfort his life with her best endeavors, a new object given to her for daily care and sacred ministration. Mr. Carstairs would not hear of dallying in the hateful spot where his shame had come to him. He insisted that the "Sans Peur" should take them to an English port, whence they might embark immediately for home.

And Helen had reluctantly to acknowledge that the only medicine for a wrong and grief like his was a return to the life of great affairs, in which he was signally a leader.

At Liverpool, where she had landed so listlessly the previous autumn, Miss Carstairs received a letter of loving farewell and Godspeed from Posey Winstanley at Cannes. The girl could not keep out of her phrases of affection the note of common sense, which made Helen's humiliating experience a subject of ultimate rejoicing by her friends. She was sure that Helen was going home to new happiness, new occupation, a generally broadening horizon. In the continual circling of moderns around this little globe the friends were sure to meet again, "early and often," Posey prayed. She had entirely regained her health, the weather was getting piping hot, Reine des Fées was too dreadfully dull now that dear John Glynn had gone back "for good" to his office in New York; even Lady Campstown had been taken off by Lord Clandonald for a visit to Beaumanoir; and lastly—it was on the cards that Mr. Winstanley and Posey might also soon go to make acquaintance with England in the Spring.

No word of her marriage. While Helen was pondering upon this theme a steward brought her another letter that had been taken out of a later mail-bag. It was a *mot d'adieu* from Lady Campstown, containing, among other items of information, a statement that Posey's wedding was "indefinitely postponed."

The perennial Miss Bleecker, although smarting still under the contemptuous dismissal given her by Mr. Carstairs at Taormina, was next seen that Spring at Cadenabbia, hanging on, rather miserably, to the skirts of Mrs. Vereker. The two ladies, waiting there for Mr. Vereker (who had been walking barefoot at Brixen, in wet grass), were heard to bicker continually, to the discomfort of all within earshot. In due time they were joined by and accompanied Mr. Vereker to a new cure he had heard of, at a place in Switzerland, where the *régime* consisted of skim milk and electricity.

The hotel which sheltered the party proved to be situated upon a sylvan hill-top, surrounded by a park stocked with tame deer, with "Verboten" placarded over every spot where one most desired to go. A merry Swiss

lad was hired by the management to jodel in an adjacent grove, but there were no visible cows. One beheld, instead, a flock of theatrical sheep, perpetually conducted up and down verdant slopes by a shepherd and a dog. Also, a band of native singers, the men in tweeds and Derby hats, the women in custom-made blouses and gored skirts, who came often to warble disconsolately upon the terrace. There was even a cuckoo sequestered in the woods, of which Miss Bleecker snappishly complained, as a horrid clock, striking all out of order to wake people up at 5 A.M., until some one told her it was the genuine bird of Shakespeare, when she called it a darling little thing.

For a long, long time it rained at this resort, and the guests sat on damp iron chairs in the veranda and looked at where the view had been some weeks before. After that it was grilling hot, and as Mrs. Vereker and Miss Bleecker were obliged to stay on for the completion of Mr. Vereker's treatment, the temper of the party became something too awful for words.

The chief solace of the two ladies was to read French novels and English weekly newspapers. When the "Queen" published,

among "Americans in London," a picture of the beautiful Miss Winstanley in her presentation gown, describing the glories of its "white and silver, with lilies-of-the-valley bunched around the train," together with details of the young lady's success in the fashionable world under the sponsorship of Lady Campstown, Miss Bleecker may have been said to have received her punishment for many follies in the past.

A perfect day of early July saw the visit of Miss Winstanley and her father to Beaumanoir, so long projected and so rudely interrupted, at last an accomplished fact. Lady Campstown, who had taken up her residence with her nephew under the supposition that he still needed her care, sat outside, after luncheon, with Mr. Winstanley, between whom and herself an excellent comradeship had sprung up. She saw nothing odd in the old fellow's quaint manners, his homely exterior, his shyness and reverence toward women. She had always liked his having come out of the Southern rather than the Northern portion of the States, feeling, somehow, more in touch with people from below the fabled line of Mason and Dixon than with their aggres-

sively prosperous neighbors. She liked his showing nothing of his wealth and potentiality, and enjoyed his shrewd talk. Above all, it must be said she liked him for being the progenitor of Posey, who had finally wound herself and tangled herself in the dowager's heart-strings, not to be dislodged.

They had been talking of the girl, and the fact that despite her brilliant little sortie into London society, she did not look quite happy —quite herself.

"It will be as well for her when it is all over," said Lady Campstown, plying her knitting-pins. "But I don't think it's done her real harm to have seen things the way we do them. And another year, perhaps—who knows? There are always changes." She ended with a sigh.

"If you are alluding to my daughter's marriage, ma'am," said Herbert Winstanley, speaking with authority and swallowing a lump of final disappointment, "I was wanting a chance to tell you that she's about concluded that John Glynn and she will be better friends than lovers. I had been suspecting something of the kind when she told me—on the Fourth it was, and I had to laugh when

she said she chose that day on account of George Washington and the cherry tree, because she couldn't tell a lie. That's Posey, Lady Campstown. Always a laugh on her lip when a tear is in her eye. I saw how hard it went with her to have to rob me of a dear hope. But I reckoned if her mother'd been living it'd not have been let go so far. It's a hard thing for a man of my age to play on a little delicate musical instrument like a girl's heart. It's over, anyhow, and she's written giving Glynn his freedom. I think Posey would like you to know these circumstances, ma'am, seeing you're the best substitute for a mother the little girl has had. She doesn't want you to think her light or triflin' in such things; she tried hard to be loyal to him and me. . . . But even if she'd loved John well enough to be his wife, there was an obstacle. He had kept company with another young lady first, and they'd been separated by his being poor. . . . I presume you'll agree that a young fellow who'd once been in love with Miss Helen Carstairs couldn't find giving her up as easy as it seemed."

"So that's the meaning of it all?" cried her ladyship, dropping her knitting, which

the Schipperke proceeded to guard as if it were a Dutch baby asleep in a canal-boat. "I often wondered, but could not be sure. I almost thought it was M. de Mariol."

"Well, I shouldn't think that would suit, exactly," said the old man, cautiously nodding his Anglo-Saxon head. "Not but what he's a nice man, the Monseer. But, as things look now, my boy is a better match for Mr. Carstairs' daughter, and John'll feel more sure of himself to ask her again. She's had a hard time, that sweet lady, and I wish her many years of happiness to forget it in. You see, ma'am, my Posey thinks John *will* ask her again."

Lady Campstown, who had long since resigned herself to see the vision of Helen at Beaumanoir fade from her imagination, here felt a great new jet of hope spring up in her heart and water everything around it. Her withered cheek glowed rosy red, her eyes had a girlish lustre. She hardly presumed to put her thoughts into words, and yet the mild blue orbs of old Mr. Winstanley had fixed themselves upon hers with a singular significance.

"Mr. Winstanley! You have another idea?" she exclaimed, nervously trembling.

"Several, ma'am," said Herbert Winstanley. "You know by this time, I reckon, that your nephew got that bad hurt on the cheek and just missed losing his eyesight, to save Posey from a mad woman. Girls set store by such experiences, I suppose. But long ago, on the steamer, I saw she fancied him mightily. . . . I won't conceal from you, ma'am, it isn't what I'd have picked out for Posey. Doesn't seem suitable for such a Hail Columbia sort of girl, now, does it? But Clandonald's a white man, I'll say that for him. . . . And m' wife set a great store by English people and their homes. . . . They're staying away a good long time, those young folks. . . . The doctors threaten I'll have to spend my winters in Cannes, the years that are left to me, but I reckon Villa Rain des Fays is big enough for us all."

When Clandonald and Posey came back at last from seeing the white peacocks they were walking hand in hand, and a great peace had settled upon their faces.

THE END

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